

**STATE PLAN FOR THE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM  
AND  
STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR THE NORTH  
CAROLINA STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICES PROGRAM**



**Updated for FFY 2013  
Effective 10/1/2012 – 9/30/2013**

**State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and  
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program**

## NC Dept of Health and Human Services - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan for Fiscal Year 2013 (submitted FY 2012)

### Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

- 1.1 The **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services** is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [1] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [2].
- 1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services** [3] agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [4], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [5], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.
- 1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [6], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [7], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan.  
Yes
- 1.4 The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding this State Plan and its supplement.  
Yes
- 1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement.  
Yes
- 1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law.  
Yes
- 1.7 The (enter title of state officer below)  
Yes  
Director Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
... has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.
- 1.8 The (enter title of state officer below)...  
Yes  
Secretary Department of Health and Human Services  
... has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.
- 1.9 The agency that submits this State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.  
Yes  
State Plan Certified By  
As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ed80-013.pdf>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed? Yes

Name of Signatory: Albert A. Delia

Title of Signatory: Acting Secretary

Date Signed 06/26/2012

Assurances Certified By

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2013

No

Comments:

- Certification Regarding Lobbying (ED 80-0013) for the NC DVRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Certification Regarding Lobbying (ED 80-0013) for the NC DVRS Supported Employment Program

Signed? Yes

Name of Signatory: Albert A. Delia

Title of Signatory: Acting Secretary

Date Signed 06/26/2012

\* The signatory of the assurance with the authority to execute and submit the State Plan will maintain a signed copy of the assurance(s) with the signed State Plan.

Section 1 Footnotes

- [1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.
- [2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- [3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.
- [4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.
- [5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.
- [6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- [7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

## **Preprint - Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures**

### **2.1 Public participation requirements. (Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.10(d), .20(a), (b), (d); and 363.11(g)(9))**

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

The designated state agency, prior to the adoption of any substantive policies or procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan, including making any substantive amendments to the policies and procedures, conducts public meetings throughout the state to provide the public, including individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to comment on the policies or procedures.

(b) Notice requirements.

The designated state agency, prior to conducting the public meetings, provides appropriate and sufficient notice throughout the state of the meetings in accordance with state law governing public meetings or, in the absence of state law governing public meetings, procedures developed by the state agency in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council.

(c) Special consultation requirements.

The state agency actively consults with the director of the Client Assistance Program, the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council and, as appropriate, Indian tribes, tribal organizations and native Hawaiian organizations on its policies and procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan.

## **Preprint - Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement**

### **3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement. (Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)**

- (a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.
- (b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.
- (c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:
  - 1. comprehensive system of personnel development;
  - 2. assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
  - 3. innovation and expansion activities; and
  - 4. other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.
- (d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.

### **3.2 Supported Employment State Plan supplement. (Sections 101(a)(22) and 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)**

- (a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.
- (b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

## **Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan**

### **4.1 Designated state agency and designated state unit. (Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.13(a) and (b))**

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
2. The designated state agency is a state agency that is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and includes a vocational rehabilitation unit as provided in paragraph (b) of this section. (Option A was not selected/Option B was selected)
3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:
  - A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
  - B. has a full-time director;
  - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
  - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

### **4.2 State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council. (Sections 101(a)(21) and 105 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.16 and .17)**

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

(a) The designated state agency is an independent state commission. (Option A was not selected/Option B was selected)

(b) The state has established a State Rehabilitation Council that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17 and the designated state unit.

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;

2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
  3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and
  4. transmits to the council:
    - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
    - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
    - C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.
- (c) If the designated state unit has a State Rehabilitation Council, Attachment 4.2(c) provides a summary of the input provided by the council consistent with the provisions identified in subparagraph (b)(3) of this section; the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations; and, explanations for the rejection of any input or any recommendation.

**4.3 Consultations regarding the administration of the State Plan. (Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.21)**

The designated state agency takes into account, in connection with matters of general policy arising in the administration of the plan and its supplement, the views of:

- (a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;
- (b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and
- (e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

**4.4 Nonfederal share. (Sections 7(14) and 101(a)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 80.24 and 361.60)**

The nonfederal share of the cost of carrying out this State Plan is 21.3 percent and is provided through the financial participation by the state or, if the state elects, by the state and local agencies.

**4.5 Local administration. (Sections 7(24) and 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47) and .15)**

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

- (a) ensures that each local agency is under the supervision of the designated state unit with the sole local agency, as that term is defined in Section 7(24) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47), responsible for the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program within the political subdivision that it serves; and
- (b) develops methods that each local agency will use to administer the vocational rehabilitation program in accordance with the State Plan.

**4.6 Shared funding and administration of joint programs. (Section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.27)**

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency submits to the commissioner for approval a plan that describes its shared funding and administrative arrangement. The plan must include:

- (a) a description of the nature and scope of the joint program;
- (b) the services to be provided under the joint program;
- (c) the respective roles of each participating agency in the administration and provision of services; and
- (d) the share of the costs to be assumed by each agency.

**4.7 Statewide and waivers of statewide. (Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.25, .26, and .60(b)(3)(i) and (ii))**

**X** This agency is not requesting a waiver of statewide.

- (a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.
- (b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:

- 1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
- 2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
- 3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewide requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
  - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
  - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
  - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
  - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

- (c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewide requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

**4.8 Cooperation, collaboration and coordination. (Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.22, .23, .24, and .31, and 363.11(e))**

- (a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.

The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.

- (b) Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.



Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4) describes the designated state agency's:

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
  - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
  - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
    - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;
    - ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
    - iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and

- iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

(d) Coordination with statewide independent living council and independent living centers.

The designated state unit, the Statewide Independent Living Council established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364, and the independent living centers described in Part C of Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 366 have developed working relationships and coordinate their activities.

(e) Cooperative agreement with recipients of grants for services to American Indians.

1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. **Yes**

2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:

A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;

B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and

C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

**4.9 Methods of administration. (Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.12, .19 and .51(a) and (b))**

(a) In general.

The state agency employs methods of administration, including procedures to ensure accurate data collection and financial accountability, found by the commissioner to be necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the plan and for carrying out all the functions for which the state is responsible under the plan and 34 CFR 361.

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

The designated state agency and entities carrying out community rehabilitation programs in the state, who are in receipt of assistance under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and this State Plan, take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions as set forth in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(c) Facilities.

Any facility used in connection with the delivery of services assisted under this State Plan meets program accessibility requirements consistent with the provisions, as applicable, of the Architectural Barriers Rehabilitation Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the regulations implementing these laws.

**4.10 Comprehensive system of personnel development. (Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.18)**

Attachment 4.10 describes the designated state agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of

qualified state rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated state unit. The description includes the following:

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development with respect to:

1. Qualified personnel needs.
  - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
  - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
  - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.
2. Personnel development.
  - A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
  - B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
  - C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(b) Plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel.

Development, updating on an annual basis, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel based on the data collection and analysis system described in paragraph (a) of this subsection and that provides for the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare and retain personnel who are qualified in accordance with paragraph (c) of this subsection, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(c) Personnel standards.

Policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.

2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.
3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
  - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;
  - B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
  - C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
  - D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

Policies, procedures and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training. The narrative describes the following:

1. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology.
2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

(f) Coordination of personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

**4.11. Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports.**

(Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2) and 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.17(h)(2), .29, and 363.11(b))

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:

A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and

iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.

B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

Attachment 4.11(b) identifies on an annual basis state estimates of the:

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;

2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and

3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

1. Attachment 4.11(c)(1) identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.

3. Order of selection.

If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):

- A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
  - B. provides a justification for the order; and
  - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.  
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

- 1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
  - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
  - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
  - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
  - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
- 2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
  - A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
  - B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
  - C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
  - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
  - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
  - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
  - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

**4.12 Innovation and expansion. (Section 101(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.35)**

- (a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:
  1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and
  2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

- (b) Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the reserved funds identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) will be utilized.
- (c) Attachment 4.11(e)(2) describes how the reserved funds were utilized in the preceding year.

**4.13 Reports. (Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.40)**

- (a) The designated state unit submits reports in the form and level of detail and at the time required by the commissioner regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under the State Plan.
- (b) Information submitted in the reports provides a complete count, unless sampling techniques are used, of the applicants and eligible individuals in a manner that permits the greatest possible cross-classification of data and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

## **Preprint - Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

### **5.1 Information and referral services. (Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.37)**

The designated state agency has implemented an information and referral system that is adequate to ensure that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who do not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services if the agency is operating on an order of selection, are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, including counseling and referral for job placement, using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment, and are referred to other appropriate federal and state programs, including other components of the statewide work force investment system in the state.

### **5.2 Residency. (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1))**

The designated state unit imposes no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the state.

### **5.3 Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services. (Sections 12(d) and 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.36)**

- (a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. Yes
- (b) If No:
  - 1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
  - 2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
    - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
    - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
    - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
  - 3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

### **5.4 Availability of comparable services and benefits. (Sections 101(a)(8) and 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.53)**

- (a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.
- (b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:
  - 1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;



2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
  3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
  4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
  5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
  6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.
- (c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:
1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
  2. an immediate job placement; or
  3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.
- (d) The governor in consultation with the designated state vocational rehabilitation agency and other appropriate agencies ensures that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination that meets the requirements of Section 101(a)(8)(B)(i)-(iv) of the Rehabilitation Act takes effect between the designated state unit and any appropriate public entity, including the state Medicaid program, a public institution of higher education, and a component of the statewide work force investment system to ensure the provision of the vocational rehabilitation services identified in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, other than the services identified in paragraph (b) of this section, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

**5.5 Individualized plan for employment. (Section 101(a)(9) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.45 and .46)**

- (a) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, except if the state has implemented an order of selection, and is developed and implemented for each individual to whom the designated state unit is able to provide vocational rehabilitation services.
- (b) Services to an eligible individual are provided in accordance with the provisions of the individualized plan for employment.

**5.6 Opportunity to make informed choices regarding the selection of services and providers. (Sections 101(a)(19) and 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.52)**

Applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives are provided information and support services to assist in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.52.

**5.7 Services to American Indians. (Section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.30)**

The designated state unit provides vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the state to the same extent as the designated state agency provides such services to other significant populations of individuals with disabilities residing in the state.

**5.8 Annual review of individuals in extended employment or other employment under special certificate provisions of the fair labor standards act of 1938. (Section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.55)**

- (a) The designated state unit conducts an annual review and reevaluation of the status of each individual with a disability served under this State Plan:
  - 1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or
  - 2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.
- (b) The designated state unit carries out the annual review and reevaluation for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative) to determine the interests, priorities and needs of the individual with respect to competitive employment or training for competitive employment.
- (c) The designated state unit makes maximum efforts, including the identification and provision of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services, to assist the individuals described in paragraph (a) in engaging in competitive employment.
- (d) The individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the individual's representative has input into the review and reevaluation and, through signed acknowledgement, attests that the review and reevaluation have been conducted.

**5.9 Use of Title I funds for construction of facilities. (Sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.49(a)(1), .61 and .62(b))**

If the state elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs, the following requirements are met:

- (a) The federal share of the cost of construction for facilities for a fiscal year does not exceed an amount equal to 10 percent of the state's allotment under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for that fiscal year.
- (b) The provisions of Section 306 of the Rehabilitation Act that were in effect prior to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 apply to such construction.
- (c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

**5.10 Contracts and cooperative agreements. (Section 101(a)(24) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.31 and .32)**

- (a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

The designated state agency has the authority to enter into contracts with for-profit organizations for the purpose of providing, as vocational rehabilitation services, on-the-job training and related programs for individuals with disabilities under Part A of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, upon the determination by the designated state agency that for-profit organizations are better qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services than nonprofit agencies and organizations.
- (b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) describes the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

## **Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration**

### **Section 6: Program Administration**

#### **6.1 Designated state agency. (Section 625(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(a))**

The designated state agency for vocational rehabilitation services identified in paragraph 1.2 of the Title I State Plan is the state agency designated to administer the State Supported Employment Services Program authorized under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act.

#### **6.2 Statewide assessment of supported employment services needs. (Section 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(b))**

Attachment 4.11(a) describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section 101(a)(15)(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and subparagraph 4.11(a)(1) of the Title I State Plan with respect to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment services, including needs related to coordination.

#### **6.3 Quality, scope and extent of supported employment services. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(c) and .50(b)(2))**

Attachment 6.3 describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services to be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.

#### **6.4 Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(d) and .20)**

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) identifies the state's goals and plans with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act.

#### **6.5 Evidence of collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services. (Sections 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(e))**

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

#### **6.6 Minority outreach. (34 CFR 363.11(f))**

Attachment 4.11(d) includes a description of the designated state agency's outreach procedures for identifying and serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

#### **6.7 Reports. (Sections 625(b)(8) and 626 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(h) and .52)**

The designated state agency submits reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the commissioner may require and collects the information required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Part B, of Title VI and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

## **Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration**

### **7.1 Five percent limitation on administrative costs. (Section 625(b)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(g)(8))**

The designated state agency expends no more than five percent of the state's allotment under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for administrative costs in carrying out the State Supported Employment Services Program.

### **7.2 Use of funds in providing services. (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), .11(g)(1) and (4))**

- (a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.
- (b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.
- (c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

## **Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services**

### **8.1 Scope of supported employment services. (Sections 7(36) and 625(b)(6)(F) and (G) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54), 363.11(g)(6) and (7))**

- (a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).
- (b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.
- (c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

### **8.2 Comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities. (Sections 7(2)(B) and 625(b)(6)(B); 34 CFR 361.5(b)(6)(ii) and 363.11(g)(2))**

The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome.

### **8.3 Individualized plan for employment. (Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 625(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.46(b) and 363.11(g)(3) and (5))**

- (a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.
- (b) The individualized plan for employment:
  - 1. specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
  - 2. describes the expected extended services needed; and
  - 3. identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.
- (c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

## Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

- the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and
- explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

### Input and Recommendations from the North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council (NC SRC)

During FFY 2011, members of the State Rehabilitation Council provided input through various venues as follows:

- The Council's Executive Committee addresses State Plan development, implementation, and progress towards both Plan goals and SRC goals within the Goals, Priorities and Strategies section of the State Plan during monthly meetings with the Division's director and staff. The full council also provides input into the state plan and needs assessment planning processes regularly during the quarterly meetings.
- The SRC Consumer Input and Public Outreach Committee planned and conducted two stakeholder input forums in Goldsboro and Greensboro, NC and incorporated the input into the recommendations presented below.
- Over the course of the FFY 2011, the SRC's Policy and Rules Committee reviewed and provided feedback on policy drafts including subjects pertaining to the following areas:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-Employment Services Policy Revisions</li><li>• On-the-Job, Work Adjustment, and Internship Training Policies Revisions</li><li>• Personal Assistance Service Policy Revisions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State Audit 2010 Casework Errors&amp; Improvement Measures</li><li>• Mental Restoration Services Policy</li><li>• Determination of Financial Need and Comparable Benefits</li></ul>
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- Policy Manual changes were also discussed and how the information would be integrated into the ARRA-funded new case management system known as Business Electronic Access Management (BEAM). BEAM will be able to maintain electronic documents while creating greater efficiencies in making determinations.

**Other recommendations NC DVRS has received from the North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council:**

**Recommendation 1:** Based upon the successful piloting using telephonic-based survey methods during FFY 2010, the Council recommended to expand the use of this method and prioritize the required

financial resources toward this method to significantly improve the response rate of the consumer satisfaction survey.

**Division's Response:** The Division responded through implementing a contract with a third party organization commencing April, 2012 that will require the contractor to conduct telephone-based consumer satisfaction surveys to 500 consumers who were considered to be non-responders to the paper-based surveys. The web-based survey is also operational and consumers are notified of this option through materials mailed out with the paper-based survey.

**Recommendation 2:** In support of their strategic plan pertaining to legislative advocacy, the Council recommended again this year for the Division to prepare for their distribution, customized reports for each NC legislative district featuring the beneficial return on investment that the VR program has on consumers and on the economy of each district within NC. A subsequent recommendation was made to make this information available to all unit offices via the Division's intranet.

**Division's Response:** The Division supported this request, revised the customized reports based on input and also added success stories to provide a human element to the data presented. All requested reports were generated again this year for their distribution to all NC Legislators. This information was also made available to all unit offices via the Division's intranet.

**Recommendation 3:** In order to sustain the momentum gained in the previous 2 years to the Division's development of self-employment services, policy and procedures, the Council recommended for the ARRA-funded small business specialist position to be converted to a permanent position if resources allowed.

**Division's Response:** The Division supported this recommendation through reallocating an existing vacant permanent position that was subsequently posted and filled April 16, 2012 by a qualified small business specialist. This individual continues to provide direct support services to staff and consumers and closely collaborates with partners that offer financial resources and technical support services to individuals with disabilities who are interested in pursuing this employment option.

**Recommendation 4:** The Council recommends for the Division to continue to assess the intake and eligibility determination process to see if it can be streamlined and uniform as possible, so the consumer understands what is required to be made eligible for services and what they can do to assist with this process to help expedite their rehabilitation process.

**Division's Response:** The Division will continue to review this as it implements the new electronic casework management system and then further evaluates any further adjustments to be made through the work of one of the state plan goal committees established to facilitate progress on the newly established goals for FFY 2012-14.

**Recommendation 5:** In order to enable council members to participate in council meetings to the greatest extent possible, the Council has recommended for the Division to explore alternative meeting methods using technology allowing remote call-in or remote access participation.

**Division's Response:** The Division supports this recommendation and is working with Council members to identify technological solutions that will sufficiently enable their remote participation.

**Recommendation 6:** The Council recommends for the results of the consumer satisfaction survey to be more closely investigated by a subcommittee, focusing on a closer analysis of the satisfaction rate of consumers in the central region as compared with the western and eastern regions.

**Division's Response:** The Division will support the Council's subcommittee in their evaluation of the results and more detailed analysis of the results obtained in the FFY 2011 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results report, including analysis of consumer satisfaction differences between regions.

**Recommendation 7:** The Council recommends jointly conducted consumer input sessions to be held twice annually collecting input from various communities across the state.

**Division's Response:** The Division will continue to actively support jointly conducted input sessions twice annually canvassing various communities across the state about their perception of how the VR program is addressing their vocational rehabilitation needs through its service provision.

**Recommendation 8:** The Council recommends for the Division, along with the Council to support ongoing collaboration with the Statewide Independent Living Council in their exploration and collaborative dialog pertaining to the Economics of Disability-how people with disabilities can achieve economic independence within the current economic system and systems of support and how the current systems can be changed to better facilitate economic independence for individuals with disabilities.

**Division's Response:** The Division will continue to enthusiastically support this collaborative effort and systemic assessment.

**Recommendation 9:** The Council recommends for the Division to support continued development of strong training standards for employment specialists/job coaches, and their supervisory staff members.

**Division's Response:** During FFY 2012, Rules pertaining to the strengthening of these standards are expected to be finalized and put into place, pending its successful approval and routing through all required channels as required by the current NC Administrative Procedures Act.

**Public Participation in the State Plan Process** In addition to posting the draft state plan goals on the Division's public website and providing an active e-mail link for submitting comments, the Division conducted six public meetings throughout the state regarding the North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan and the Supported Employment Program State Plan Supplement. The meeting locations included Greensboro, Jacksonville, Morganton, Greenville, Statesville, and Sanford, NC. The public meetings were held after providing adequate notice of the meetings and providing procedures for the public, including individuals with disabilities, to comment on the draft goals and strategies and any service or policy concerns for the development of the FFY 2013 State Plan. Notices of the public meetings were sent to a comprehensive and diverse list of individuals, advocacy groups and other interested stakeholders via email, list serves and press releases. Additionally, invitations to 500-1500 active consumers per location were also mailed out to individuals located within easy driving distance to the public input meetings. Alternate communication formats were made available at the public meetings upon request and sign language interpreters were present at all meetings, to enable anyone who attended and required the services to participate fully. The public was encouraged to provide input into the State Plan annual update process in a variety of ways including: oral comments at any public meeting, fax, and email, through website or other submission of written comments for a designated period. The published deadline to submit written input into the FFY 2013 State Plan was June 1, 2012.



The following is a summary of the major comments from the public meetings and submitted written comments relative to the State Plan and NC DVRS' Service Program:

**Process, Communication & Capacity:** <>Some consumers or parents had attended public input meetings at all locations for specific guidance pertaining to the progress of their case or what they are to expect as part of the upcoming processes. They had specific questions or concerns pertaining to their unique case, but no specific input relating to systemic improvement other than encouraging increased communication between staff and the customer and anything we can do to continue to streamline and clarify the steps in the rehabilitation process.

**Community Rehabilitation Program Services:** <> At Jacksonville, Greenville, and Morganton locations, Disability Rights North Carolina urged NC DVRS to consider implementing a formalized approach that would assure that valid referrals are systematically made from providers of Adult Development Vocational Programs to the VR Program for those individuals who may benefit from VR services. Their primary concern is that some individuals who would be appropriate referrals for a transition to VR may be overlooked if a systematic approach or formalized requirements to routinely assess ADVP participants for such transition is not put in place. It was acknowledged that the transitions may be working in some locations, but not consistently across the state. <> Disability Rights North Carolina at three input sessions also urged NC DVRS to continue their work to employ "strong training standards" to ensure that job coaches are adequately equipped to provide effective services, since they hold job coaching services as a critical element for the employment success of individuals with significant disabilities.

**School-to-Work Transition Services:** <> At Jacksonville, Greenville, and Morganton input sessions, NC Disability Rights North Carolina encouraged the Division to actively engage and evaluate independent living and vocational rehabilitation potential of students with disabilities sooner than the routinely observed junior year of high school for increased success, especially those who will require services for an extended period of time. <> A parent of a transition-aged individual with an intellectually delayed disability encouraged the Division to work with the school systems to introduce speakers or special events designed to have young individuals with disabilities to begin to think about vocational potentials and possibilities as soon as junior high, since they often focus too much on other life activities and not on what they **can** do vocationally.

**Collaboration:** <> At Greensboro and Greenville input sessions, the Division was urged to partner closely with NC CILS, NC A&T and ECU to provide support for the newly received NC AgrAbility grant funding that has returned to the state. <> Collaboration to establish programs where none exist that can meet the needs of individuals transitioning from prisons who have nowhere to go and no positive direction or accountability. <> A CIL representative from Disability Advocates & Resource Center in the eastern region mentioned that they have enjoyed an excellent collaborative relationship with several of the offices located in that region. <> In Greenville, an employer mentioned an interest in employing more individuals with disabilities and also collaborating with the Division to facilitate the medicaid approval of a device that reportedly has a high success rate in treating individuals with autism. <> A member of an advocacy group for mental health services encouraged increased planning collaboration between VR, its partners such as DMH/DD/SAS and Social Security Administration to more effectively engage the Ticket to Work program and look to other states to see if they have successfully increased their effectiveness in employing individuals with disabilities through more effectively presenting work incentives. <> A CIL representative serving the Greensboro region announced that they were investing resources into becoming ADA enforcers and encouraged collaboration with them in this capacity.<> A CRP in the central part of the state had indicated that they were very supportive of our recent hiring of a small business specialist and were looking forward to collaborating with us while mutually serving consumers.

**Identified Barriers/Needs:** <> At several input sessions, it was noted that ex-felons who have disabilities continue to face significant barriers with employers and that more efforts are needed to help encourage employers to give individuals with criminal backgrounds a second chance through education and incentives to increase their risk tolerance. <> Staff member presented their perspective that the need to reach consumers quickly via cell phones and to provide timely transportation are both key elements in responding quickly to job placement orders from local employers in rural areas. Creative problem solving around addressing these needs is encouraged. <> Accessible transportation for individuals with significant disabilities and students with disabilities who cannot drive continue to be extremely significant barriers in rural NC, as reported at the Morganton input session by a parent of an individual with developmental disabilities. <> A consumer provided input in response to flier received stating that assistance with transportation and car insurance are ongoing support services that really make a big difference to an individual participating in a rehabilitation plan. <> At the Greensboro input session a contractor who serves as an employer for the deaf commented that communication for the deaf and hard of hearing population continues to persist as a significant barrier, causing many individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing to be underemployed. The commenter stated further that her experience has been that Internships and OJT programs have been very effective for this disability group.

**Positive Testimonies:** <> A former participant in the Jacksonville, NC area read the press release announcing the upcoming input session and responded via e-mail saying that they have been successfully employed for five years at Camp Lejeune as the result of a collaborative effort between Coastal Enterprises CRP and the Division and is thankful for the help he received. <> At the Greensboro input session, a consumer shared that they were successfully receiving services and he was participating in an internship twice weekly with an Information Technology department in Forsyth County. Another consumer indicated that they were successfully participating while she was actively looking for employment and has been participating in weekly job clubs at the local unit office.

**Client Assistance Program:** <> At the Greenville input session, a representative of a CIL based in Greenville, Disability Advocates & Resource Center, requested consideration of the Client Assistance Program to be redesignated organizationally to an appropriate entity outside of the VR program, as it is currently structured for purposes of perceived conflict of interest and concern about the possibility of retaliation against a consumer, should a consumer request assistance/file a complaint. At the same Greenville input session the Client Assistance Program director acknowledged that while there could be perceived conflict of interest, he expressed that the facts do not substantiate this and that a review of cases over the past ten years, 90 percent of resolutions have been in the favor of the consumer requesting assistance.

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE NC DVRS CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS FOR FFY 2011\*:** \*A more complete report is available; a summary is included here since MIS system space limitation prevents inclusion of the full report.

**BACKGROUND:** The consumer satisfaction survey is conducted to meet the mandate of Section 105 (c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which states that the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) shall, among performing other required functions: Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and client satisfaction with:

(A) the functions performed by the designated State agency; (B) vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this Act; (C) employment outcomes achieved

by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.

**Current Survey Process:** The current survey process is conducted by the State Rehabilitation Council in cooperation with Division Management and staff of the Planning and Evaluation Unit of the Division. Both the SRC and the Division have the responsibility for analyzing and reporting the results of the survey. The Division contracts with a community rehabilitation program to perform the preparation and mailing of the surveys. During Federal Fiscal Year 2011, surveys were sent to former consumers of the Division whose cases were closed either as successfully rehabilitated in employment (status 26) or not successfully rehabilitated after VR services were provided (status 28). Along with the survey the consumers received an instructional letter that explains why they are being asked to complete the survey and to let them know that individual survey responses will be kept completely confidential. A toll-free number is provided if assistance is needed and the survey is available in alternative formats if requested.

**Overview of Satisfaction Survey:** The Division's consumer satisfaction survey form consists of nine closed-end questions and is printed in English. The survey was designed to measure the consumer's experience with the state vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. The survey also measures if the consumer received information about the Client Assistance Program and if they were informed of their right to appeal Division decisions. A series of questions determine the consumer's satisfaction with their rehabilitation counselor and the consumer's involvement in their rehabilitation program, and finally identification of factors that have prevented a consumer from receiving a job. An addition was also made to this version of the survey to ask specifically who is completing the questions, the VR consumer with or without help, a family member or a caregiver.

#### **RESPONSE RATE AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:**

**Response Rate:** Table 1 shows the survey response rate. Overall, of the 10,553 surveys mailed, 1,181 were returned and entered and 1,481 were returned because of inaccurate mailing addresses. This is a response rate of 11.19% for the entire sample and 13.03% when the number of inaccurately addressed surveys is taken into consideration. The majority of the survey responses were from consumers whose case had closed successfully (73.41%). Consumers whose cases closed with an employment outcome returned the survey at a greater rate than those whose cases did not close in employment, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 1: Response Rate for the 2010-2011 Federal Fiscal Year**

		%
<b>Number Closed 26 &amp; 28</b>	11047	
<b>Number of Surveys Sent</b>	10553	
<b>Returned Undelivered</b>	1487	
<b>Returned Completed</b>	1181	
<b>Adjusted Response Rate</b>		13.03%

**Table 2: Closure Status of Survey Respondents**

Closure Status	Survey Respondents
Successful Outcome	73.41%
Unsuccessful Outcome after Receiving Services	26.59%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100.00%

**OVERVIEW OF SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS:****How were consumers helped?**

The survey asks participants how much they feel that VR assisted them in various aspects of the rehabilitation process. The results are displayed in Table 3. Overall, the majority of respondents indicated that VR assisted them at least "some" for each of the aspects. However, while just over half of respondents (52.79%) indicated that VR did identify their needs towards becoming employed "a lot", less than half of the respondents indicated "not at all" to whether VR assisted them in finding on the job training (44.51%) or placing them in a job (46.22%). These results were an improvement over the previous year's (46.57% and 50.47% respectively). These items are important as they are directly related to the core mission of the agency. Respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with their involvement in their rehabilitation program. Just over eighty percent (81.13%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their level of involvement, a slight increase from the previous year (80.03%).

**Table 3: Type of Assistance Received from VR Services**

	Not at all	Some	A lot
Identify your needs toward becoming employed	13.85%	33.36%	52.79%
Determine what type of work you wanted	15.55%	40.39%	44.07%
Search for a job	23.20%	32.62%	44.18%
Decide on job choices	23.87%	41.57%	34.56%

Find on-the-job training	44.51%	25.51%	29.98%
Place you in a job	46.22%	20.94%	32.84%
Keep your job and follow up with you after you went to work	28.84%	25.11%	46.04%
Learn about services provided by other programs or agencies	29.99%	38.55%	31.46%

#### **How satisfied are former consumers with VR Services?**

The consumer satisfaction survey contains a series of questions that ask the former consumer to rate their experiences with the VR counselor, response time for services provided by VR staff and their overall level of satisfaction. Satisfaction is broken down in the survey in terms of the consumer's satisfaction with their counselor as it relates to: (a) understanding the consumer's needs, (b) availability of the counselor, (c) counselor working with the consumer as an equal partner and (d) offering options to meet the consumer's needs. Based on survey results shown in table 4, counselors were easy to contact, understood the needs of the consumer and worked with them as an equal partner. At least eighty percent of respondents say they were satisfied or very satisfied with their counselor for each of these items.

**Table 4: Satisfaction with VR Counselor Interactions:**

	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Understanding your vocational rehabilitation needs	14.63%	31.82%	53.55%
Being easy to contact	12.92%	35.56%	51.52%

Working with you as an equal partner	13.86%	31.37%	54.77%
Offering options to meet your needs	17.87%	31.78%	50.35%

Overall, as shown in Table 5, just two-thirds of respondents (68.27%) rated their experience with NC DVRS as excellent or above average and approximately the same percentage of respondents (65.19%) rated the response time for services provided by VR staff as excellent or above average. Based on a 1 to 5 scale in which a score of one indicates “poor” and a score of 5 indicates “excellent, the mean rating was 3.99 for overall satisfaction. The mean rating for response time was 3.92.

**Table 5: Satisfaction with VR Experiences:**

<b>Overall how would you rate your experience with the North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) program?</b>	
Excellent	50.69%
Above average	17.58%
Average	18.44%
Below average	6.60%
Poor	6.69%
<b>How would you rate the response time for services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff?</b>	
Excellent	48.38%
Above average	16.81%
Average	20.65%
Below average	6.91%
Poor	7.25%



#### **Attachment 4.7(b)(3) Request for Waiver of Statewideness**

Identify the types of services to be provided by the program for which the waiver of statewideness is requested.

The waiver request should also include:

- a written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the designated state unit the non-federal share of funds;
- a written assurance that designated state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect;
- a written assurance that all state plan requirements will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

**This attachment does not apply to the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the FFY 2013**



#### **Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

#### **Division's Response:**

The NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NC DVRS) extensively collaborates with and utilizes the services of federal, state, and local entities to achieve its mission on behalf of NC citizens with disabilities. The Division routinely pursues improving its overall effectiveness through working relationships, partnerships, contracts and formal or informal agreements with entities at all these levels. NC DVRS maintains written cooperative agreements with various federal, state, and local agencies. These include but are not limited to the Social Security Administration; the United States Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs; the North Carolina Division of Medical Assistance; the North Carolina Division of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing; NC Office of Long Term Services and Supports; NC Division of Social Services; the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse; and numerous local school systems, hospitals, and physical medicine and rehabilitation centers. The Easter Seals / United Cerebral Palsy Society of North Carolina, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Heart Association, and the North Carolina Arthritis Foundation are examples of consumer and advocacy groups for individuals with disabilities with which the Division has agreements. The above referenced agreements facilitate the maintenance of the highest feasible level of communication and coordination in the joint development and implementation of operational methods including, where applicable: • Assisting consumers, their families, and advocates in accessing services from the Division and from the other agencies and entities; • Referral of individuals who have disabilities and especially those who have severe disabilities to the Division for services; • Referral by the Division to other agencies or entities for the various supportive services and assistance available; • Determination of the responsibility of each agency or entity in making referrals, in serving individuals jointly, and in identifying resources; • Provision of educational information regarding the services, including equipment and assistive technology, available and eligibility criteria of the Division and of the other agency or entity; • Joint training of staff in areas pertaining to services available and procedures of the Division and the other agency or entity; • Shared funding for Division position and program costs and co-location of Division staff with staff from the other agency or entity where co-location would be effective and feasible; • Developing means to promote greater awareness and greater utilization of the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act; • Provision for the sharing of information between agencies upon receipt of client permission and with regard to maintaining confidentiality. • Establishing an evaluation system to determine levels of competency of paraprofessionals such as interpreters for the deaf who wish to serve as vendors for the Division; • Enhancing post-secondary training supports to assist in the transition to employment; • Improving the public image of the employment capabilities of individuals in various disability groups; • Assessing the effectiveness of the cooperative agreements; • Jointly promoting improvement in the quality of life through comprehensive approaches to the improved health of consumers jointly served and through services to family members; jointly promoting ethical research practices to develop improved medical and other disability related interventions; • Promoting systems change through collaborative projects; • Expanding services and community resources for unserved and

underserved groups; • Promotion of collaboration at the community office level offices between the Division and other agencies and entities; • Through joint planning councils, providing joint input from the Division and from other agencies and entities for budgeting, service delivery, and policy changes for block grants, special demonstration projects, and other grants; • Providing input regarding formulation of vocational services provided by other agencies and entities.

**Coordination with the North Carolina Statewide Independent Living Council and Independent Living Centers:** Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are consumer-controlled, cross-disability, community-based non-residential, private non-profit organizations that provide programs and services for people with all types of disabilities and their families. The goal of CILs is to promote and support opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in an integrated community and search for the possibilities to live as they choose. These centers are funded through Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Information and referral, independent living skills training, advocacy, and peer counseling are the four core services each center provides. In addition to these core services, the centers may provide additional services which are tailored to serve individuals with disabilities in their service area.

The Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in North Carolina work with the Division's local Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Program and NC Assistive Technology Program staff to coordinate services for specific individuals and also to address areas of broader systemic impact such as community education/awareness and outreach to various disability groups.

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is an independent non-profit council (not an entity within a state agency) that is established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. The majority of its members are individuals with disabilities. The SILC is responsible for jointly developing and endorsing the State Plan for Independent Living in conjunction with the designated state unit (NC DVRS and NC Division of Services for the Blind). The duties of the SILC are to monitor, review, and evaluate the implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living. Further, the SILC is mandated to coordinate activities with the State Rehabilitation Council and other councils that address the needs of specific disability populations.

**Interagency Cooperation and Use of Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the USDA:** The Division is actively collaborating with agricultural extension agents serving Watauga, Ashe, and Allegheny counties to meet the needs of agricultural workers with disabilities who are employed in the apple growing and Christmas tree farm industries. The Division does make information known to its counselors regarding the availability of direct loans made available through USDA programs for individuals residing in rural areas who wish to create or expand a business.

**State Use Contracting Program:** At this time, NC DVRS does not directly engage in formally established state use contracting program, where commodities or service determined to be of use to state agencies are purchased from community-based rehabilitation programs employing and training individuals with significant disabilities. The Division is, however, engaged in a contract with a community-based rehabilitation program for the envelope stuffing, sorting, processing and mailing of the Division's client satisfaction surveys. Furthermore, NC DVRS does sponsor activities through several community rehabilitation programs who provide training services to

the Division's consumers through contracts as in the following examples: one CRP program contracts with NC Department of Transportation to maintain the facilities and grounds of (4) rest areas on Interstate 95 for an amount exceeding \$500,000 per year; another CRP program maintains three state contracts to maintain the facilities and grounds on three different sites located along separate highways in their area. • one CRP program contracts with NC Department of Transportation for warehousing and distribution of public service brochures, posters, flyers, bumper stickers, and other educational/promotional materials for safety campaigns to increase use of seat belts, reduce driving under the influence, and defensive driving. This is a three-year contract with variable reimbursement depending on the demand and mailing costs.

## **Attachment 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials**

- Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
  - consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
  - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
  - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
  - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

### **PART I: Description of Plans, Policies and Procedures for Coordination with Education**

**Officials to Facilitate Provision of Transitional Services: General overview:** The NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has a state level memorandum of agreement (MOA) with NC Department of Public Instruction which outlines a collaborative partnership between the two agencies to provide state level approval and support for enhanced transition services to serve youth with disabilities. The VR unit offices and local education agencies (LEA) customize a local MOA for their community to outline how they will work closely together, along with the local transition team to target specific needs in the agreement to provide transition services. The MOA allows for collaboration between VR staff and school transition personnel, sharing of information, joint participation in students' IEP meetings, and incorporating individualized transition portion of the IEP into the IPE. The Division's 91 local MOAs with the 115 LEAs in NC fund 111 school counselors and additional VR staff including casework assistants, technicians, vocational evaluators and business relations representatives (formerly job placement specialists) available to provide VR transition services in the local community. In 2006, the NC legislators approved the addition of 16 staff positions dedicated to the provision of VR transition services. In areas where there is not an MOA in place, the local manager has designated a VR counselor to directly serve the youth with disabilities in the local schools. In 2003, NC DVRS updated the transition policy to emphasize the intense efforts to serve transition aged youth. Each of the VR unit offices developed an action plan of transition activities to enhance areas such as: • general outreach and information exchange to local school system; • outreach to younger students; • meeting with the transition coordinator; • building administrative support for the transition program; • relationship and transition team building with school transition staff; • staff development for VR and school transition personnel; • expanded involvement with WIA, Mental Health and other adult agencies that support the Individualized Education plan (IEP) and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); • attending IEP meetings and identifying students who are at risk for dropping out. Many of NC public school personnel directly involved in providing transition services to students with disabilities are members of the national and North Carolina's division of the

professional organization through the Council for Exceptional Children / Division of Career Development and Transition (DCDT). Since 2004, the VR state program specialist and VR school transition counselors have participated in NC-DCDT regional training meetings and the annual training conference sponsored by NC's DCDT. This participation allows for cooperative training and information sharing for improved partnerships between NC DVRS and school systems toward the provision of transition services in the local communities.

**Plans for Coordination with Education Officials:** The Division plans to maintain and strengthen its programmatic relationships with school transition services through its continued active participation by the Division's Transition Specialist and a school counselor on the State Capacity Building Team for Transition. This team, including NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) leadership, NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, University Center for Development and Learning, Parent/Child Advocacy Agency, Business Representative and Local Education Agency (LEA) representative was formed in recent years to develop state-wide goals and provide better coordinated transition activities for students with disabilities to achieve better results with post-school outcomes, including obtaining employment or attending post-secondary education. The Division and the NC DPI accomplished a training plan during the FFY 2008 to strengthen and expand a multi-agency council for improved and innovative transition services for youths with disabilities transitioning into employment. One of the objectives of this council was to develop a training course for counselors to assure that transition services are addressing the emerging needs while simultaneously addressing the new RSA monitoring guidelines. The commitment to collaboration was renewed at the 2012 Capacity Building conference, where the statewide team committed to hold quarterly meetings to build upon and improve the existing interagency collaboration, maintain and track momentum on new goals established at this conference.

**Description of Policies and Procedures for Coordination with Education Officials:** Through its casework policy, NC DVRS requires each local VR office with vocational rehabilitation counseling staff serving on a local school transition services team to send an annual report to the school systems with which the Division has a third party cooperatively funded program. This report includes data about services and expenditures for students with disabilities provided by the Division, and also addresses how VR staff have worked with school staff in transition planning for students with significant and most significant disabilities. The annual report also addresses how the Division is partnering with the school system to address the work experience requirements of the Occupational Course of Study. Furthermore, a vocational rehabilitation counselor is assigned to serve each high school where no formal cooperative agreement exists. The designated staff visits these schools on an itinerant basis and implements a system for referral generation and their subsequent processing. This approach is expected to include a mechanism for identifying students with disabilities and at risk for dropping out of school. In order to plan effectively for the transition needs of students with disabilities in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, the Division's counselors are expected to be active participants addressing the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting transition issues when possible. NC DVRS vocational rehabilitation counselors are expected to participate both directly in IEP meetings and indirectly by other means in planning for the needs of VR clients. The Occupational Course of Study, as a pathway to an NC high school diploma, requires that students with marked disabilities that are eligible for this pathway participate in a specific number of hours of school-based, community/volunteer-based and competitive work experiences as part of the requirements. The implementation of this pathway in 2000 has enhanced VR's ability to develop an IPE to provide services specific to youth in transition early within the high school experience prior to exiting. Two specific services "In School Work Adjustment" and "Community Based Assessment and Training" are VR services provided through the IPE to support the student's success in the OCS pathway to a NC high school diploma. It encourages the student to develop an IPE for transition from school to work within the second and or third year of high school.

**PART II: Description of Development and Approval of Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for Transitioning Students:**

The Division's casework policies addressing the provision of transition services defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Furthermore, NC DVRS policy states that the coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Finally, NC DVRS casework policies require that transition services must promote or facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the student's individualized plan for employment. In order to plan effectively for the transition needs of students with disabilities in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, NC DVRS rehabilitation counselors are expected to be active participants addressing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting transition issues when possible. Counselors are expected to participate both directly in IEP meetings and indirectly by other means in planning for the needs of VR consumers. A copy of the transition portion of the IEP is required to be maintained in the case record. Prior to developing the IPE, the VR counselor reviews the Individual Transition Plan (ITP) component for the Individual Education Plan and records any relevant ITP objectives as part of the IPE. The intent of this review is to coordinate educational programming and vocational programming for the benefit of the VR consumer. Additionally, the Division's policy stipulates that the development of the IPE with a student must be based on interest, aptitude, capabilities, strengths and informed choice. The job choice on the IPE for a student in transition may indicate a family of jobs rather than a specific job code, e.g., Health Care Worker, Office Work, Protective Services (Police, Fireman, Security Guard, etc.). Division policy does require career exploration to be provided and documented in order to determine a more specific goal. Amended job choices including amendments at closure, must be accompanied by documentation reflecting the process and services that had an impact on the final job choice (job shadowing, job sampling, guidance and counseling). Moreover, NC DVRS casework policy stipulates that the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment must be completed as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, by the time each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting. This includes students with disabilities who are eligible for VR services including eligible students served by the school under an IEP.

**PART III: Description of the Formal Interagency Agreement between NC DVRS and the State Education Agencies:**

In order to assure effective facilitation of the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, NC DVRS maintains both a joint formal agreement with the Exceptional Children's and Instructional Services Divisions of the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) and also maintains 91 separately held formal agreements with local education agencies (LEA's) or school programs. Within the formal interagency agreement between NC DVRS and NC DPI, mutual interagency responsibilities include:

- Mutual participation of appropriate personnel in the development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program and the Individualized Plan for Employment for students with disabilities.
- Designation of an individual from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Exceptional Children Division, and Instructional Services Division to serve as liaison with each other to represent the services of the two agencies.
- Exchange of information deemed pertinent and of mutual concern regarding service delivery.
- Interagency cooperation in transition planning for students with disabilities.
- A mutual system to be developed and maintained to ensure that appropriate referrals are made to each party.

**Part IIIA. Consultation and technical assistance to assist Educational Agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services:**

A description of NC DVRS responsibilities pertaining to this area: Within the formal interagency agreement, the NC DVRS has responsibility to ensure the provision of an appropriate program of vocational rehabilitation services to each perspective VR client by:

- Providing administrative, technical and consultative services when needed through local, regional and state vocational rehabilitation services' staff to local school administrative units serving students with disabilities in transition programs. NC DVRS' program specialist for transition services and the state program consultant for transition with DPI, cooperatively provide programmatic information, training and support to local school systems and to VR transition staff to maintain and enhance the quality of transition services for successful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. The NC DVRS specialist provides regular technical support to schools by participating in and presenting at transition training institutes regarding transition services and adult service agencies. Also, visiting and providing consultation and training at the local schools with transition teachers, coordinators, job coaches etc.
- Screening students with disabilities referred to NC DVRS by the local school administrators to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. Eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services is based on the presence of a physical or mental impairment which for the individual constitutes a substantial impediment to employment. The student must require vocational rehabilitation service to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. The determination of eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services provided by NC DVRS is the sole responsibility of NC DVRS and is not delegated.
- Administering all aspects of the NC DVRS vocational rehabilitation program services including the determination of eligibility, diagnostic and evaluation services, rehabilitation planning, transition services and the provision of a program of vocational rehabilitation services. Some services are subject to the student's financial eligibility and/or comparable benefits.
- Providing vocational assessment trial work and adjustment services to students with disabilities who have an identified need and meet eligibility requirements.
- Providing appropriate data to the Exceptional Children Division about the number of school age students served by NC DVRS, by disability, age, types of services provided and post-school employment outcome.
- Promoting the development of cooperative agreements between NC DVRS and local school administrative units that include the following components:
  - Roles of each agency;
  - Financial responsibilities;
  - Vocational Rehabilitation staffing and supervision by the NC DVRS;
  - Procedures for outreach, referral, liaison staff between the parties, eligibility, delivery of services, dispute resolutions, sharing of appropriate client information and student involvement;
  - Joint staff development and training;
  - Services to students with disabilities who are not receiving special education services;
  - Assurances of compliance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 105-17), Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (P.L. 105-332), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.
- Along with the local educational agency, provide and implement an ongoing evaluation of the cooperative efforts with a formal annual review of the proposed budget and any necessary interagency agreement updates.

**A description of Exceptional Children Division's responsibilities pertaining to this area:**

Through the formal interagency agreement in place, the Exceptional Children's Division of the NC DPI has the following responsibilities with respect to the provision of technical assistance and consultation with local educational agencies:

- Provide technical assistance to local school administrative units to assure access for students with disabilities in appropriate Career and Technical Education Programs based on recommendations of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team;
- Assist local school administrative units in the planning, development and implementation of transition services for students with disabilities.
- Provide appropriate data to NC DVRS pertaining to students needing services, i.e. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Certified Child Count for Special Education. Inform local school administrative units of services available from NC DVRS and promote referral generation.
- Provide technical assistance to local school administrative units to

assure access for students with disabilities in appropriate Career and Technical Education Programs based on recommendations of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. • Promote the provision of psychological, vocational, assistive technology, and educational assessment and work adjustment services by local school administrative units for students with disabilities having an identified need. • Promote the development of cooperative agreements between Vocational Rehabilitation Services and local school administrative units in keeping with 34 C.F.R. Section 361.38 Protection, Use, and Release of Personal Information. • Provide the framework for the collection of data by school systems regarding students transitioning from school to post school activities who are enrolled in the Occupational Course of Study.

**A description of Instructional Services Division's responsibilities pertaining to this area:**

Through the formal interagency agreement in place, the Instructional Services Division of the NC DPI has the following responsibilities with respect to the provision of technical assistance and consultation with local educational agencies: • Provide needed consultation to assure the initiation of cooperative career/technical education and internship programs for students with disabilities involved in local school administrative units and other state agencies. • Provide consultative services to local school administrative units and other state agencies and institutions to assure initial placement and maintenance of eligible students with disabilities in Career and Technical Education Programs. • Provide needed consultation to assure the initiation of cooperative career/technical education and internship programs for students with disabilities involved in local school administrative units and other state agencies. • Provide consultative services to local school administrative units and other state agencies and institutions to assure initial placement and maintenance of eligible students with disabilities in Career and Technical Education Programs. • Promote the provision of vocational/technical assessment services, career-decision making training, vocational instruction, and transition planning for students with disabilities in local school administrative units. • Promote career/technical education counseling, cooperative work experience, internships and job placement of students with disabilities by local school administrative units. • Assist local school administrative units in the planning, development, collection of data, and implementation of transition services for students with disabilities.

**Part III B. Transition planning by personnel of NC DVRS and the Educational Agencies that facilitates the development and completion of their Individualized Education Programs:** The interagency agreements between NC DVRS and the Education Agencies stipulate that transition planning for students with disabilities will be a cooperative effort. Furthermore, the agreements specifically require mutual participation of appropriate personnel in the development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program and the Individualized Plan for Employment for students with disabilities. The sharing of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) at the local level is strongly encouraged. NC DVRS vocational rehabilitation counselors are required to review a student's transition component of the IEP and incorporate, as appropriate, a description of relevant objectives in the IPE. Furthermore, a comprehensive evaluation will be completed by the State agency on each eligible individual, to the degree necessary, to determine the vocational goal and scope of vocational rehabilitation services to be included in the IPE. The agreements state that the student with the disability is expected to fully participate in the development of the plan and any plan amendments. The agreements specify that the NC DVRS vocational rehabilitation counselors will provide the individuals with information sufficient to make an informed choice among alternative goals, objectives, services, entities providing such services and methods to procure such services. Additionally, the agreement requires that the vocational rehabilitation counselor is to review the IPE with the individual or his/her representative at least once each year.



**Part III C. Summary of Roles and Responsibilities, including provisions for determining and developing qualified personnel responsible for transition services:** Summary of Roles and Responsibilities of NC DVRS under the agreements: • Provide a program of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals referred by the third party and to other individuals found eligible for services. • Collaborative development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for students with disabilities. • Provide effective and appropriate supervision of the vocational rehabilitation activities and VR staff assigned to provide the services. • Provide administrative and consultative support, in the area of its program responsibilities, to the local education agency. • Share statistical and fiscal reports to other parties as deemed mutually necessary to assure open communication and good administrative practices. • As part of the agreement, NC DVRS Rehabilitation Counselors will: o provide individuals with information sufficient to make an informed choice among alternative goals, objectives, services, entities providing such services and methods to procure such services. The counselor is to review the IPE with the individual or his/her representative at least once each year. o provide each eligible individual an IPE Handbook wherein there is an appeals process outlined. Information pertaining to the Client Assistance Program (CAP) is included in the handbook. o agree not to close an individual's record as having achieved a successful employment outcome until the person exits school and is determined that the individual has successfully completed the IPE. • conduct an annual survey of students in the school system. • The vocational rehabilitation counselor will place major emphasis on students who are Juniors, Seniors, or potential dropouts. • screen referrals from other sources within the school system to enable students with disabilities who do not have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) to be considered for vocational rehabilitation services. • Mutually agree to utilize appropriate staff development personnel in the planning and implementation of joint inter-disciplinary team training and/or staff development for purposes of effectively providing transitional services to students with disabilities. • Liaison personnel appropriate and qualified for the provision of transitional services, recommending needed changes and implementing the agreement will be appointed by the administrative units of the parties named in the agreement with the educational agencies.

**Part III. D. Summary of Financial Responsibilities of Each Agency:** The interagency agreements between NC DVRS and Education Agencies including the NC Department of Public Instruction and Local Educational Agencies/School Boards stipulate the financial responsibilities of each party. Financial responsibilities of respective parties are described in more detail within the agreements between NC DVRS and the LEA's, since this satisfactorily addresses the need. Summary of financial responsibilities of NC DVRS under the agreements: • Provide Federal funding in the amount of 78.7 percent of the agreed-upon annual budget depending on the availability of Federal funds and the program arrangements. • Maintain accounts and supporting documents that will permit an accurate determination at any time of the status of State and Federal participation of expenditures incurred in operation of the rehabilitation program. • Assume responsibility, within the limitation of resources, for the cost of services included in the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) according to NC DVRS' established policies and fee schedule. • Within the limitations of available resources, provide case service funds necessary to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services • Accept financial responsibility for the cost of NC DVRS' portion of cooperative training efforts and maintain proper accounts and records of these activities. Summary of financial responsibilities of the Educational Agency partners under the agreements: • Parties entering into an agreement contribute to NC DVRS an annual cash amount of 21.3 percent of the agreed-upon annual budget. Whereas NC DVRS must provide funds equal to the State's share of planned expenditures as specified in the Federal Act. The local per centum match funds are to consist totally of non-Federal funds that have not or will not be used to match Federal funds other than Federal Vocational Rehabilitation funds used in this program. • Any contribution of funds is made available for expenditure at the sole discretion of the NC DVRS. It is understood that such funds must be spent for rehabilitation services

and for the administration of those services; that expenditures must be made under the approved agency State plan; and that expenditures must be made under the control and supervision of the NC DVRS. • Provide all individuals determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services with those services that are its legal and traditional responsibility, e.g., assistive technology required and included in an individual's IEP, without cost to the NC DVRS. The cooperative program is utilized to provide services which represent new services or new patterns of services when compared to existing services. • Provide and maintain adequate facilities and office space that is accessible to both staff and individuals with disabilities, private for individual counseling, with conditions that are conducive to confidentiality and counseling. • Accept financial responsibility for the cost of their party's portion of cooperative training efforts and maintain proper accounts and records of these activities.

**Part III E. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services:** NC DVRS ensures that students with disabilities who are not receiving special education services have access to and can receive vocational rehabilitation services, if appropriate, by ensuring outreach to and identification of these students. Outreach to these students occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. NC DVRS vocational rehabilitation counselors are required to contact persons in the schools responsible for coordinating services to students under IDEA and 504 plans and are instructed to conduct high school surveys in order to identify eligible students with disabilities. The importance of completing outreach to students through non-traditional means to identify students is emphasized in the Division's casework policy. Furthermore, in order to generate appropriate referrals, NC DVRS counseling staff are encouraged to contact other resource personnel within the local schools including social workers, school nurses, occupational, physical and speech therapists. One of the primary goals of the Division's provision of transition services is to work with youth with disabilities who are at risk of dropping out of school or who are age 16. Students who have a definite need for services may be served earlier than that age. There are differences in available staff and in numbers of youth with disabilities in school systems, which impact the attainment of this goal. However, the counselor makes individual eligibility decisions for persons referred to NC DVRS by schools and serves them in keeping with the above goal. Factors to consider for "potential dropout" referrals include: (a) verbal indications by the student of intent to leave school, (b) students with disabilities failing half of course work, and (c) students in danger of not receiving course credits due to excessive absences.

**PART IV: Other Evidence and Historical Information Regarding Collaboration with Education Officials:** Since 2003, the Division's Transition Specialist and a school counselor have served together with NC DPI representatives, Parent/Child Advocacy Agency and the Center for Development and Learning (Youths 4 Advocacy) to form a statewide capacity building team to develop and provide coordinated transition activities for students with disabilities to achieve better results with post-school outcomes, including obtaining employment or attending post-secondary education. The 1992 - 1998, six-year State Systems Change Grant on Transition Services was a catalyst to the formation of a strong state transition planning presence between NC DPI and VR. The Division's vocational rehabilitation staff participates in an annual Exceptional Children's Conference and regularly scheduled cross training regarding the provision of services at the local level. Specialized cooperative training activities, workshops and conferences have existed over the years and will continue to occur periodically, including both Vocational Rehabilitation staff and educators in conjunction with the requirements of the state's Comprehensive Plan. Vocational Rehabilitation enhanced the transition policy in 2003 to increase the level of services available to individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. The Division also increased its efforts to provide Supported Employment services to facilitate transition more effectively. Furthermore, the Division included an emphasis on providing available support services during high school and developed a

statewide budget for Community-Based Assessment, in order to expand this opportunity for students. This service supports the additional pathway (Occupational Course of Study) to achieve a high school diploma that was approved by the NC School board in 2000. The Occupational Course of Study enables students with significant disabilities to partially fulfill the requirements for a high school diploma through work experience. During 2002-2003 the Division, in collaboration with the NC Department of Public Instruction, developed and provided four training sessions statewide for agency Rehabilitation Counselors working in cooperative school programs. The purpose was to improve coordination of services between local education agencies (LEA's) and NC DVRS in developing transition plans for youth with disabilities. The training was designed to ensure that participants were familiar with requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the 1998 Amendments of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act for transition services to youth with disabilities exiting schools and moving into further training or employment. In addition to this, there was an added focus on better understanding and collaboration regarding the Occupational Course of Study and services to persons with learning disabilities. This collaborative effort was quite productive for all involved parties and will hopefully continue to impact the promotion of coordinated, quality services to transitioning students with disabilities. During 2007, the Division has actively pursued more in-depth training for agency personnel involved in transition services to students with disabilities. Please reference Attachment 4.10 to note the Division's extensive cooperation and initiative toward meeting transition services training goals, improved compliance with IDEA, and cooperation with North Carolina's state educational system. The CSPD mandate has been instrumental in helping the Division's rehabilitation counselors achieve better knowledge and understanding of federal laws including the Rehabilitation Act and IDEA. This knowledge has given more meaning, credibility and professionalism to the application of services to students with disabilities. It has also enhanced professional relationships with school partners with whom the Division collaborates in the provision of transition services. Every year the Division participates in the North Carolina Exceptional Children's Conference along with county school systems and the NC Department of Public Instruction. During FFY 2008, the Team for State Capacity Building: Secondary Education and Transition Services completed the annual review and update of the Transition Plan for North Carolina. The plan and team is directed by the tool provided by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) to establish and enhance transition services to states. The goals that were identified to be addressed in the next year that will require full participation by NC DVRS and State Public Education are as follows: 1. Develop a plan to implement NSTTAC capacity building model locally with NC DVRS and school system staff by regional teams. 2. Community Based resource mapping. Discussion to begin at state level to be replicated locally. 3. Organize and Implement a state interagency team. One goal of the team is to target legislative level issues impacting transition. 4. NC DPI is to have ongoing Training and Summer Institutes. NC DVRS school counselors can participate in training to increase knowledge of transition services for students with disabilities to assure that transition services are addressing the emerging needs of state public school system while simultaneously addressing the RSA objective to provide transition-age youths with services to prepare for and obtain employment. The jointly developed plan with NC DPI to assist communities to build capacity for transition services in local areas through a training institute was partially implemented during FFY 2010. However, NC DVRS and NC DPI's commitment to maintaining collaboration did result in the development of a one day training session that was conducted at multiple locations across the state. The training included the NC DVRS State Transition Specialist, NC DPI State Transition Consultant and the Community Work Incentive Coordinators meeting in local NC DVRS offices to deliver information about Transition updates and changes in NC within the school system and the Division in addition to providing Social Security Work Incentives information to NC DVRS Transition staff and local school system staff. The NC state planning team began a planning process spanning FFY 2010 and 2011 with the purpose to execute the original transition training objective identified in the state plan. As a result of the planning of the Transition Capacity Building Summit, the scheduling of the one day training sessions that were being

help up to that point was put on hold. The purpose of the resulting Transition Capacity Building Summit is to replicate the state planning process at the local level which will facilitate training and team building for the local school systems and cooperative VR offices that attend. The training conference will be a combination of lecture sessions and group work activities, centered around building capacity for participating local community level transition teams to implement transition-focused education. Each team will be the local school system exceptional children's division transition staff and the cooperative VR office. The planning tool focuses on assisting state teams to review and plan their strategies for increasing capacity within their community. The framework of transition-focused education provides a structure for educational planning that is outcome-oriented and promotes greater involvement and ownership in the decision-making process by key stakeholders, particularly students and their families.

The NC Secondary Education and Transition Services planning team began a planning process during SFY 2011 with the purpose to execute the original transition training objective identified in the state plan. The purpose of the resulting Transition Capacity Building Summit is to replicate the state planning process at the local level which will facilitate training and team building for the local school systems and cooperative VR offices that attend. The training conference will be a combination of lecture sessions and group work activities, centered around building capacity for participating local community level transition teams to implement *transition-focused education*. Each team will be the local school system exceptional children's division transition staff and the cooperative VR office. The planning tool focuses on assisting state teams to review and plan their strategies for increasing capacity within their community. The framework of transition-focused education provides a structure for educational planning that is outcome-oriented and promotes greater involvement and ownership in the decision-making process by key stakeholders, particularly students and their families. The transition capacity building professional development training summit was completed February 24 - 25, 2011. The NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) was the major sponsor of local grants to the Local Educational Agency (LEAs) to attend the Transition Training Summit allowing 8 LEA teams to attend from across the state lead by the school system Exceptional Children's department. The 8 school systems from around the state received a grant to invite and sponsor local partners to participate in the local transition team. The Summit concentrated on Student Focused Transition Planning through Interagency Collaboration. The 8 school systems selected by NC DPI were challenged to develop an action plan for improving the provision of transition services systemically in their school system and receive technical assistance as needed from the Exceptional Children's Division (ECD) to enhance and implement the LEAs Continuous Improvement Performance Plans (CIPP). NC DVRS was instrumental in planning and providing presenters to at the summit. The State planning team has a continuous goal to include other LEAs in additional summits. At any point that this planning summit is not available, serious consideration will be given to the reinstatement of the one-day Interagency Collaboration Sessions in local VR Units for continued collaboration and exchange of needs and services between NC DVRS and local school systems.

During 2012, the commitment to collaboration was renewed at the 2012 Capacity Building conference, where the statewide team committed to hold quarterly meetings to build upon and improve the existing interagency collaboration, maintain and track momentum on new goals established at this conference.

## **Attachment 4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations**

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

### **Division's Response:**

Private non-profit providers of rehabilitation services are necessary and valuable partners in the delivery of the array of services needed by the individuals eligible for VR services within the state. The Division routinely seeks out such partnerships especially in geographic areas where additional services and/or service provider choices need to be established. The NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NC DVRS) establishes and maintains contracts or agreements with over 120 non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers providing an array of services to the Division's consumers. Fifty six (56) private-non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers have established performance-based contracts with the Division, where the organizations are administered funds when an individual receiving services within their program has achieved designated goals or "milestones" on their way toward their ultimate goal of competitive employment. The remainder of the non-profit private service providers provides services on an established "fee for services" rate based on actual cost of the services provided. Presently, the Division has established five (5) contracts with private non-profit service providers providing transitional employment services for the Division's consumers who are transitioning from facility-based settings to community-based settings. A private non-profit service provider can enter into an agreement or contract with the Division once it has gone through the Division's vendor approval process, by which a candidate service provider demonstrates its ability to provide services that meet established standards while fully compliant with all applicable state and Federal requirements. Site reviews are conducted to assure that programs and services are accessible to individuals served by the Division. Service rates are based largely on program costs, rates that have been established through researching regional market rates, or through competitive processes. Contracts are implemented through the Division's Center of Excellence Committee (COE), which is a committee established by the NC Department of Health and Human Services Office of Procurement and Contract Services. The committee's purpose is to identify and approve program needs, produce clear meaningful data, identify and approve outcomes, train and assist division/office program staff regarding the contractual procurement of services and reassessment of contract services. The COE includes senior management (director, section chiefs, budget officer) support and involvement. In addition to senior management, the COE includes subject matter experts in contracting, budgeting, programming, policy-making, and technology as applicable. The COE provides continuity to maintain a knowledge base about programs that can include evaluations of several contract services over long periods of time. This approach shifts the focus from contract processing to program management, ensuring that the scope of work for the service provider is tied to results.

**Collaboration with the Lumbee Tribe and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians:** During FFY 2008, both the Lumbee Tribe and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians became recipients of RSA's American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) discretionary grants.

**Lumbee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program:** Following an appointment during FFY 2009, the program director for the Lumbee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program (LTVRS) has been a participating member of the State Rehabilitation Council and has regularly attended quarterly meetings. The majority of the collaborative activity between LTVRS and the Division has occurred in the south central geographical region of the state, where the tribe is established. NC DVRS managers located within that region and LTVRS staff developed strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that assist with eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment for individuals within the covered population. Referrals are regularly made between both agencies. In order to strengthen and clarify the procedures and expectations of both agencies relating to casework, resource, and training collaboration, an interagency agreement was developed and implemented on 9/28/2009.

**Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians:** Much of the collaboration between the Eastern Band of Cherokee Tribe and the Division occurs through Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, Inc., the community rehabilitation program that provides vocational evaluation, work adjustment, and other vocationally-oriented training services for individuals with disabilities who reside on their reservation. The Division does have a contract in place with Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, Inc. (VOCI) for the purchase of these services when it is appropriate for NC DVRS clients who are not formally affiliated with the tribe. The Division does have one or two rehabilitation counselors that serve as liaisons with the tribe and VOCI which helps maintain communication channels. Historically, NC DVRS has worked closely with the vocational rehabilitation programs of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to effectively meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of eligible individuals in their service area through a collaborative relationship. The Division and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians updated their memorandum of agreement 10/19/2009.

#### **Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Services is drafting an updated renewal of the cooperative agreement with NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services to assure that collaborative efforts are current and relevant. The relationship between our two divisions has been enhanced over the past several years through not only the hiring of an employment program manager within NC DMH/DD/SAS, but also a change in focus towards employment as a treatment goal for consumers. Through this enhanced relationship and cooperative agreement, LTVS (Long Term Vocational Supports) have been put under a transparent reporting system, called the CASP system, which protects these funds instead of it being comingled as part of the IPRS (Integrated Payment and Reimbursement System) funding. The two divisions, in collaboration with advocacy groups across the state continue to identify resources for supported employment and extended services. This has allowed local service providers such as community rehabilitation programs and psychosocial rehabilitation programs to develop supported employment and/or transitional employment programs in collaboration with the two divisions.

NC DVRS places a priority on making sure that extended services are provided following the Division's provision of time-limited services by their inclusion within all contracts with providers of supported employment services. Representatives from both DVR and DMH/DD/SAS are visiting with the different local management entities/managed care organizations to educate staff on the use of LTVS dollars to include all disability groups as well as the use of LTVS funding being used as intended. In addition, many community rehabilitation programs provide extended services (long term follow up) utilizing a combination of funding sources available from the provider's income generated through other contract work and comparable benefits such as CAP Waiver DD funding and other community support workers. In addition, the utilization of employer and natural supports is often built into the supported employment plan for individuals with significant disabilities.

The established CRP-NC DVRS steering committee continues to review the provision of supported employment services in North Carolina to ensure that funding is optimally utilized so that adequate funding will be available for ongoing extended services. The steering committee continues to address the issues that surround long term support funding such as inconsistencies in the levels of disability-type funding and shortages as well.

NC DVRS partners with NC DMH/DD/SAS to further the work of the State Employment Leadership Network. The SELN provides technical assistance to implement best practices for employment.

NC DVRS is considering several different services to enhance its service offerings to consumers. The Division has issued an RFI (Request For Information) to explore the possibility of utilizing mentors to provide needed support-specific services to consumers with mental illness and substance abuse disorders. This would be a service that adheres to ideas of recovery and promising practices to serve this population. Also, NC DVRS is interested in piloting the evidence-based model of supported employment in different areas of the state utilizing its existing Supported Employment service providers within the state.

The Division's Program Specialist for Statewide Community Rehabilitation Programs and (6) Regional Community Rehabilitation Specialists provide oversight for CRP's to verify that supported employment services provided by the Division will include a transition period in which extended services will be provided jointly by NC DVRS to assess the individual's performance within their job choice and their individual adjustment and success in their position. This time allows any observed issues to be resolved and an extension of the stabilization phase if necessary.

The continued growth of the statewide network of supported employment service providers has resulted from collaboration between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and entities such as the North Carolina Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, the North Carolina International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services, the NC Developmental Disabilities Council and the Mental Health Consumers' Organization. In addition, the North Carolina Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) provides a forum for focusing on supported employment standards and expanded choices for individuals with the most significant disabilities in the state.

The North Carolina Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (NCARF) and the North Carolina Association for Persons in Supported Employment (NCAPSE) have been instrumental in the overall development of supported employment services, specifically for persons with developmental disabilities. NC DVRS, NCARF, and NCAPSE have co-sponsored training events and collaborated in the development of new supported employment programs across the state. Community rehabilitation programs (facility-based and free-standing) provide the majority of supported employment services for persons with the most significant disabilities. New community-based options are expanding through collaboration with the community college system, the Post-Secondary Education Alliance, the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, and with the addition of contracting private providers. Brain Injury Support Services continue to operate within the state in Goldsboro, Greenville, Winston Salem, Raleigh, and Charlotte areas with an interest in expanding to underserved areas of the state. In addition, transitional employment continues to be an option for PSRs to provide if the PSR is certified thru the International Center for Clubhouse



Development. Options are being explored to expand the transitional employment service to community rehabilitation programs that do not have ICCD certification.

The North Carolina Developmental Disabilities Council has sponsored funding for a new collaborative entitled the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) that will explore innovative employment endeavors through national technical assistance and discussions with a newly established state team, which includes representatives from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The NC DD council will soon release an RFA to expand employment opportunities around the state incorporating stake holders input thru regional summits. The NC DD Council, NCAPSE, and the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services continue to collaborate on supported employment training. The Annual NCAPSE Network on Employment Conference is a forum in which these organizations participate in joint training.

Finally, the Division's Employment and Program Development Section has continued to represent NC DVRS with active membership in several statewide advisory boards, including on the NC TBI Statewide Advisory Council and the Mental Health Planning Council. Established through legislative mandate in the 2003 General Assembly, the NC TBI Advisory Council's mission is to review the current definition of traumatic brain injuries, promote interagency collaboration among state agencies serving this population, study the needs of persons with traumatic brain injuries and their families, make recommendations regarding a comprehensive service system for this population, and promote and implement injury prevention strategies across the state. The council continues to work on the development of a state plan for all agencies involved in services to persons with brain injuries, including a component for vocational rehabilitation services. The Mental Health Planning Council meets quarterly to review the annual Mental Health Block Grant Plan and to submit to the state any recommendations of the Council for modifications to the plans. The Planning Council also serves as an advocate for adults with a serious mental illness, children with a severe emotional disturbance, and other individuals with mental illnesses or emotional problems; and monitors, reviews, and evaluates the adequacy of mental health services with the state.

In addition, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation represents the agency on the "Governor's Focus on Service Members, Veterans, and their Families", a collaborative monthly meeting that serves as a resource clearinghouse on addressing issues of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and other service members. In addition, as an offshoot of this group, the Division participates in a Statewide Advisory Committee for Operation Recovery, a five-year SAMHSA-funded pilot project in the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County area of NC. The purpose of this pilot is to create a comprehensive, trauma-integrated jail diversion and support system for US military service veterans. Outreach efforts between NC DVRS, the Veterans Administration, and other military operations have occurred to assure that Veterans and their family members are aware of services available to them through the NC DVRS.

## **Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development**

### **Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development**

1. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

#### **Division's Response:**

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services utilizes a personnel system called Building Enterprise Access for North Carolina's Core Operations (BEACON). This system replaced the former system used in North Carolina state government, Personnel Management Information System (PMIS), in 2008. BEACON was initiated by the NC Office of the State Controller and supported by the NC State Legislature as a way to modernize and standardize key business processes in human resources, payroll, budget management, taxation, data storage and accounting. Reports pertaining to the desired information for the State Plan can be somewhat customized to obtain information on a current basis. The Division's Staff Development section also maintains a comprehensive database on all staff in trainee positions, working toward a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. This database includes information on the specific degree and progress toward meeting those requirements. The Division's Program, Policy, Planning and Evaluation section keeps all data regarding services to the consumers of our services. This includes comprehensive data on numbers served, significance/severity of disability, services provided, and much more. Therefore, the collection of data and analysis is done by three of the Division's sections; Human Resources, Staff Development, and Program, Policy, Planning and Evaluation. The Division served 59,349 individuals in FFY 2010-2011, of which 33,385 were individuals with significant disabilities and 15,561 with the most significant disabilities. This represents a total of nearly 82% of the people that the Division serves as people with significant or most significant disabilities. The chart below lists all Counselors, and staff in support of these Counselors. An analysis of these 667 positions was completed, with respect to current vacancies and the projected vacancy rate over the next 5 years. NC DVRS must also consider that within the next 12 months, 240 individuals will have more than 20 years of service. Exact turnover is impossible to determine in advance; however, this past year the Division experienced a 15% turnover in the Rehabilitation Counselor I positions and a 6% turnover rate in Rehabilitation Counselor II positions. The chart immediately below shows an average for the past 3 years of actual data and the expected vacancy rate based on the current data.

Job Title	Total positions	4/1/09-3/31/10 Vacancies	4/1/10-3/31/11 Vacancies	4/1/11-3/31/12 Vacancies	Average 3 Year Rate	Expected Vacancies for 5 years
Rehabilitation Counselor I	227	20	40	28	29	145
Rehabilitation Counselor II	104	17	8	7	11	55

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Rehabilitation Counselor I	207	25	105
2	Rehabilitation Counselor II	126	5	25
3	Counselor-in-Charge	54	2	10
4	Rehabilitation Administrative Counselor I	3	0	1
5	Rehabilitation Administrative Counselor II	14	0	2
6	Rehabilitation Administrative Counselor III	14	0	2
7	Vocational Evaluator	45	3	15
8	Human Resources Placement Specialist	65	7	35
9	Human Services Coordinator	27	4	20
10	Rehabilitation Casework Technician	112	11	25

2. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;

- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

**Division's Response:**

The Division closely works with all of North Carolina's Rehabilitation Counseling university programs of study through advisory board participation, internships, the Recruitment and Retention Committee, and partnerships in conferences and trainings. The chart below includes information obtained from each Rehabilitation Counseling university program, as well as from the Staff Development section's database.

**Table 3: Institutions and Type of Program, Students Enrolled in the Program, Total Number of Students Graduating During Prior Year with Certification or Certification for Licensure, and Number Employed by VR & Their Corresponding Personnel Categories:**

	Students Enrolled	Total Graduates from prior yr w/ credentials	NC DVRS Hired/ Personnel Category
NC A & T Technical State Univ.- Human Resources Rehab Counseling Master's Program.	117	15	1
East Carolina University-Rehab. Counseling Master's Program	0	31	0
East Carolina University-Vocational Evaluation Master's Program	0	4	0
East Carolina University Substance Abuse Counseling Program	41	27	0
Winston Salem State Univ.- Rehab. Counseling Master's Program	60	17	5
University of NC-Chapel Hill -Rehab. Counseling & Psychology Master's Program	17	15	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	235	109	6

**Table 4: Institutions and employees of NC DVRS who are enrolled, sponsored by agency and /or RSA, greaduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA and graduates from the previous years:**

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	NC Agricultural & Technical State University	1	1	0	0
2	East Carolina University	1	1	0	1
3	Winston-Salem State University	3	3	3	12
4	University of NC at Chapel Hill	0	0	0	0
5	TOTAL	5	5	3	13

#### **Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel**

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

#### **Division's Response:**

The Division implemented a paid internship program in January of 2005. This program was coordinated from our Staff Development section with the support of management, Human Resources, and counselors across North Carolina. Due to budget restrictions, this program was eliminated this year. The benefit of hiring interns into vacant positions is that we have a sense of the person's strengths and weaknesses prior to being hired. The additional probationary period that every new employee undergoes does allow the Division better access to a proper job match. If the person is not successful during this time, the person is released from the job in probationary status. This is not viewed the same as a dismissal. It is considered an extension of the hiring process and not disciplinary action. A majority of our interns hired by NC DVRS have been from the two Historically Black Universities in our state; NC Agricultural & Technical State University and Winston-Salem State University.

Division personnel participate in the university Rehabilitation Counseling program advisory boards within the state. The type of personnel representing NC DVRS within these advisory boards varies; however the Division is well represented and our role well respected within these programs. Our partnerships with these institutions are fortified through our staff enrolled in many of these programs, which include the historically black schools. Further, the unit offices are encouraged to participate in partnering local career fairs at the partnering universities and colleges. Marketing displays and brochures

have been provided to every unit office so that marketing materials remain available for the unit offices' activities.

A broader perspective on retention includes a comprehensive, timely and effective onboarding/orientation program. The Division recognizes that getting off to the right start can make the difference in retaining an employee. A comprehensive overview of the Division--its mission, staff, organizational structure, processes and relevant information--can ensure a good start. A new employee orientation through is being revised and will be used in coordination with local office orientation efforts.

## **Personnel Standards**

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

## **Division's Response:**

While NC DVRS modeled its counselor personnel standard after the CRCC, the Division initiated its own comprehensive standard with more specific listing of degrees that it will accept. Effective October 1, 2008, this standard-related requirement for a Rehabilitation Counselor hire includes:

- Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling;
- Master's degree in a closely related field such as Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, Sociology, Special Education, Communication Disorders, Human Services;

- Current certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or Licensed Professional Counselor;
- Current enrollment in a qualifying master's degree program AND graduation occurs prior to the date of hire.

As of 12/21/09, all individuals in the Rehabilitation Counselor I and Rehabilitation Counselor II roles met the current CSPD mandate. Currently, we have 3 employees who are considered Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees. Employees in trainee status do not function as a Rehabilitation Counselor, but are required to progress toward attaining the necessary requirements outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement within the specified timeframe. If the employee does not meet the specified requirements or they are not progressing at an acceptable rate, the employee will be separated during their probationary status period.

As of March, 2012, the Division had the following number of employees of which all meet the Division's CSPD requirements with the exception of trainees, who are making progress toward an approved Master's degree:

- Rehabilitation Counselor Trainees - 3
- Rehabilitation Counselor I - 182
- Rehabilitation Counselor II - 121
- Counselors-In-Charge- 52

The chart listed below shows the change in the past year in relationship to turnover in the Rehabilitation Counseling positions. The most significant change is noted in the position of Rehabilitation Counselor II. The Division feels this reduction is in relationship to the current budget situation within the state.

Position	2009	2010	Difference
Rehabilitation Counselor I	19%	16%	3%
Rehabilitation Counselor II	27%	15%	12%

NC DVRS currently averages around 25-30 qualified applicants for each vacancy, which is primarily attributable to the current economic climate. This means that recruitment for RC I and II's have not been as challenging as in years past. The Division does find it more challenging to find individuals prepared to serve a Deaf and Hard of Hearing caseload, but these vacancies have not been impossible to fill.

### **Staff Development**

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

**Division's Response:**

The Division continues to put forth a concerted effort to train staff in job development and placement. During, 2011 over 101 staff participated in the in a comprehensive Dual Customer Approach training initiative. All of the Division's field staff received this training. Training sessions were made available to all new hires without wait lists or alternates. Now that everyone across the state has received the training, the number of participants is dropping. That participation reflects the number of new hires. This training provides meaningful techniques to assist all employees that work with a VR Unit Office to assist in the process of developing relationships with employers. The strategy has had great success in increasing successful employment outcomes. The premise is that for job development and placement to be successful, the Division must consider the needs of both the consumer and employer. Additional training opportunities occurred for 29 NC DVRS staff during the past year in relation to job development by attending the 2011 Workforce Development Conference.

The Division also places emphasis on vocational assessments. This is reflective in its maintenance of 45 Vocational Evaluators and 3 Vocational Evaluation Specialists. As a result, the Division does not typically utilize contractual services for assessing consumers. We also strive to provide excellent training for those serving in the vocational evaluator positions. Each year, the Staff Development Department supports participating in East Carolina University's Evaluator Summer Institute. This institute consists of two graduate level vocational evaluation courses. In 2011, three Vocational Evaluators attended the summer institute courses.

Another professional development program that is available to all VR and IL staff who provide evaluation, Assistive Technology equipment and Assistive Technology services for the consumers they are serving is the NC Assistive Technology Program (NCATP). NCATP has twenty-one staff serving the state of North Carolina, the majority being Assistive Technology Consultants. Their annual Assistive Technology Expo is regularly attended by Division staff, but was recently canceled due that programs budget limitations. Plans are underway for the conference to resume in 2012 in coordination with the annual North Carolina Rehabilitation Association conference. The expo consists of two days of training and hands-on demonstration of assistive technology services and equipment. Feedback from attendees is always positive about the value of this Assistive Technology training and exposure to AT equipment and vendors.

The North Carolina Rehabilitation Association Conference in 2011 hosted 260 participants. North Carolina VR and IL staff represented 102 out of 260 in attendance. Staff benefit from the networking and learning that occurs at this annual conference. Various topics such as ethics for rehabilitation staff, effectively serving specialty populations, and assistive technology solution updates are covered at these training events.

The Division established a Bulletin Board on its Intranet for the dissemination of information between staff. General information pertaining to conferences, trainings, research, articles, and relevant rehabilitation information is shared here. Different forums also exist on this Bulletin Board for discussion among staff in specific positions; such as for Counselors, Vocational Evaluators, Business Relations Representatives, etc.

The Division sponsored 750 staff in conferences this past fiscal year. These conferences included the NC Summer and Winter School for Alcohol and Drug Studies, ECU Summer Vocational Evaluator Institute, Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America Conference, Autism Society Conference, Spring Transition Conference, All Aboard the Employment TRACC, Substance Abuse Training: Changes in AttitudeLatitude, Statewide Vocational Evaluator Training, NCARF



Conferences, NCAPSE Annual Conference on Supported Employment, NC Workforce Development Conference, NC Exceptional Children's Conference and the already mentioned Assistive Technology Expo and NC Rehabilitation Association Conference. All of the above represent diverse avenues for attaining knowledge and improving job skills.

Other Individual training request included: Making It Work, Post-Traumatic Stress & Addiction Therapies, Motivational Interviewing, Workforce and Labor Summit, Trauma Informed Care, Assessment and Intervention Program, Taking the First Steps to Recovery/Addictions, Notary Public, Unconventional Approaches to TBI conference; Mental Illness as a Spiritual Journey, Customizing Your Computer for Accessibility, Cognitive Behavior Therapy/Substance Abuse, HIV/Infectious Disease-Ethical Considerations, Mental Health As A Journey, CRCC Ethics and the Law, Social Network and Ethics and Best Practices, Determination of Financial Need, Rehabilitation & Medical Case Management Symposium, NC Association of Rehab Facilities 2012 Winter Training Southeast AHEC Traumatic Brain Injury.

Five customized trainings were provided to staff this past year. These trainings were for various identified needs; such as Team Building, Shape up your Communication Style, Working with Difficult People in the Workplace, Building A Strong Team/Effective Communication, Being Loosey Goosey/Stressful Work Environment. Other Individual Training Included: Society of Government Meeting Professionals Conference (3 sessions) ; Eastern Carolina Council AAA Conference, Real Ethics Level 2. Health and safety training included all staff with on-line training and other in-person trainings.

A large training initiative during FFY 2011 was related computer training and case automation. 2,431 staff statewide trained in the Division's customized version of Libera System 7 electronic case management system. These were live sessions that included Train-the-Trainer sessions, followed by role-based training for users along with a subsequent session for new hires. Other computer training received by individuals included Articulate Training; Microsoft Expression Web Level I; Introduction to Creating Word press Websites; Web Design Techniques, and Adobe Flash Levels I, II, III.

Management Training: 13 management trainings were provided to staff during the 2011 Federal Fiscal year: 305 managers received training in various courses including the following: Pubic Manager Program; Performance Management Training for Supervisors; Equal Employment Opportunity Institute; Managing Effective Performance; Results Based Interactions; Supporting Leadership Development; Leadership Facilitating Change; Drug-Free Workplace and Employee Assistance Program; Human Resource Skills, and Employment Mediation Training.

### **Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs**

Describe how the designated state unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

### **Division's Response:**

The Counselor has the responsibility for determining the individual's preferred language and providing a qualified foreign language interpreter/translator at the earliest possible opportunity, before or after the initial contact with the Division. This translation service is provided at no cost to the person with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). A specific budget, 1292, is designated solely for the provision of this service.

The interpreters/translators for all languages must be qualified and trained with demonstrated proficiency in both English and the native language of the client. The Membership Directory of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters at <http://www.catiweb.org/> is presently used; however, it is not required that all qualified interpreters/translators be listed in this directory.

All fundamental VR and IL forms (44 currently) are available in Spanish for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The Division's public website is also in Spanish for the section regarding VR Services to Consumers.

The Division has 14 counselors proficient in American Sign Language with caseloads specifically serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals. There are 10 technicians, 3 Business Relations Representatives, 2 Human Service Coordinators, a program specialist, and 2 Assistive Technology consultants for the deaf who support these counselors and the consumers being served. The Division has a Sign Language Interpreting Budget, 1294, designated solely for sign language interpreting. Twenty interpreting agencies and over 160 independent licensed interpreters contract with the Division and are paid out of this budget. The Division acknowledges communication as a vitally important aspect of the rehabilitation process from start to culmination and remains committed to the provision services that enable individuals who have specific communication needs to participate in the program. Further, these interpreting and translation services have been identified as essential for quality and success in the delivery of the Division's services.

### **Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**


Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

#### **Division's Response:**

North Carolina's Secondary Education and Transition Services team consisting of members from NC DVRS, NC Department of Public Instruction representatives, parents and university representatives, developed a state transition plan which includes a goal to accomplish a system of personnel development in support of the IDEIA and the Rehabilitation Act for collaboration to increase transition services to students with disabilities.

The NC Secondary Education and Transition Services planning team began a planning process during SFY 2011 with the purpose to execute the original transition training objective identified in the state plan. The purpose of the resulting Transition Capacity Building Summit is to replicate the state planning process at the local level which will facilitate training and team building for the local school systems and cooperative VR offices that attend. The training conference will be a combination of lecture sessions and group work activities, centered around building capacity for participating local community level transition teams to implement *transition-focused education*. Each team will be the local school system exceptional children's division transition staff and the cooperative VR office. The planning tool focuses on assisting state teams to review and plan their strategies for increasing capacity within their community. The framework of transition-focused education provides a structure for educational planning that is outcome-oriented and promotes greater involvement and ownership in the decision-making process by key stakeholders, particularly students and their families. The transition capacity building professional development training summit was completed February 24 -25, 2011. The NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) was the major sponsor of local grants to the Local Educational Agency (LEAs) to attend the Transition Training Summit allowing 8 LEA teams to attend from across the state lead by the school system Exceptional Children's department. The 8 school systems from around the state received a

grant to invite and sponsor local partners to participate in the local transition team. The Summit concentrated on Student Focused Transition Planning through Interagency Collaboration. The 8 school systems selected by NC DPI were challenged to develop an action plan for improving the provision of transition services systemically in their school system and receive technical assistance as needed from the Exceptional Children's Division (ECD) to enhance and implement the LEAs Continuous Improvement Performance Plans (CIPP). NC DVRS was instrumental in planning and providing presenters to at the summit. The State planning team has a continuous goal to include other LEAs in additional summits. At any point that this planning summit is not available, serious consideration will be given to the reinstatement of the one-day Interagency Collaboration Sessions in local VR Units for continued collaboration and exchange of needs and services between NC DVRS and local school systems.



## **Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment**

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

### **Division's Response:**

#### **Introduction**

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is one of nineteen divisions and offices within the Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) that provide direct services to the public. DVRS is responsible for assisting individuals who have a physical, mental or learning disability that impedes their ability to prepare for, obtain or maintain employment. North Carolina's VR Program employs approximately 830 staff members in field offices and public schools throughout the state who together provide services that are conveniently located for individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

The 2010 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) is a report of ongoing and continuous assessment efforts conducted in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council and other stakeholder groups. Many of these efforts are spearheaded by or provided in consultation with the Division's Planning and Evaluation section to improve the quality of services and better meet the vocational rehabilitation needs of consumers. This assessment report is representative of our Division's continuous strategic planning process, and the major efforts undertaken in cooperation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to ensure that individuals with disabilities are served in the most effective way possible.

The needs assessment is designed to address four assessment domains, as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act. The first three address the rehabilitation needs specific categories of consumers:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system (other than the vocational rehabilitation program), as identified by such individuals and personnel assisting such individuals through the components [of the system].

The last objective is specific to community rehabilitation programs (CRPs):

- An assessment of the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Beginning October of 2007, North Carolina's VR Program initiated a new needs assessment cycle (CSNA 2010), the report of findings of efforts undertaken during this three year period ending September, 2010. The subsequent assessment cycle (CSNA 2013), which is an assessment conducted once every three

years, will cover the assessment period beginning October, 2010 and conclude September 2013 by which date an updated final assessment report will be completed.

## **Planning Overview**

### **Guiding Principles**

The framework for the needs assessment includes both structural and process components that reflect a set of ideals we considered to be the core values or guiding principles within the scope of this project: systems thinking, participatory dialogue, empirical data, partnerships and collaboration, and strategic planning

### **Organizational Goals**

The guiding principles of this framework are intended to achieve three organizational goals specific to the vocational needs of North Carolinians with disabilities: anticipate and manage change, create a stronger service delivery infrastructure, engage the public and create stakeholder involvement.

### **Basic Needs Assessment Model**

Our 2010 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment report emphasizes major assessment initiatives over a three year period. These activities were conducted in three phases: organizing and planning; needs assessment research; and the identification of strategic issues. The strategic issues identified through the research phase of the assessment, will become a springboard toward the formulation of goals and strategies and the future planning and research for the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment cycle.

### **Organizing and Planning**

The purpose of this phase was to develop a planning process that would build commitment, engage stakeholders as active partners, use participants' time effectively, and result in planned needs assessment research that could be realistically implemented. This preparation helped participants understand the activities that were undertaken, their responsibilities, how long specific activities would take, and the form in which results were expected. We considered that a carefully planned approach to needs assessment research would be key towards gaining support for the process, staying on track, avoiding frustration, and arriving at a quality result. The planning process was designed by identifying what each process would entail, how long each step would take to accomplish, and who would be responsible for each task. It also involved identifying resource needs before beginning the research to avoid any "squeeze" that might otherwise occur later in the process. The principal resources for the planning effort were the time contributed by participants, but additional monetary resources were needed for travel and to conduct surveys. All of the planned needs assessment research activities were carefully outlined and managed using timelines and work plans, while remaining flexible to accommodate changes as they arose. In organizing and planning the needs assessment, we envisioned two types of participants that would be needed to successfully complete the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment: core support; and stakeholder participants. These two types of participants formed the organizational structure for the planning and implementation of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

### **Core Support**

The foundation of core support was our specialized Core Support Team within the Division's Program Policy, Planning and Evaluation Section. Our team included executive staff members to guide the process and specialists to provide technical guidance and analysis. Support staff also assisted in coordinating needs assessment activities. Our core support team was responsible for organizing the needs assessment process and moving it forward. Special committees and subject matter experts were consulted at several phases of the needs assessment to provide consultation and guidance on portions of the work that was

being done. The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) helped to guide and oversee the needs assessment process.

### **Stakeholders**

Our stakeholders include all persons, agencies and organizations with an investment or stake in the vocational outcomes of individuals with disabilities. This broad definition includes all persons and organizations that benefit from and/or participate in the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. We considered stakeholder participation integral to the success of the needs assessment and for legitimizing the process by offering strong initial support and providing a range of knowledge.

### **Needs Assessment Research**

Needs assessment research activities were conducted throughout the three year cycle, and organized through what we identified as major theoretical components, or dimensions to assessing needs. We consider the “assessment of need” as undergirded by these four underlying structural pillars:

- Forces of Change;
- Demographics of VR consumers and North Carolinians with Disabilities;
- Vocational Rehabilitation Service Delivery System;
- Strengths and Opportunities;

### **Identifying Strategic Issues**

The identification of strategic issues involved interpreting the vast amount of information that had been gathered during the research phases and determining what we believed to be truly important and actionable. We distinguish strategic issues from “critical” issues in that critical issues are important, whereas strategic issues are important and also forward thinking, and seize on current opportunities. Strategic issues are actionable; they represent fundamental policy choices and critical challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve our vision for North Carolinians with disabilities. The strategic issues we identified are the foundation upon which planning strategies will be developed. The results from this phase of our assessment form the basis for the Conclusions section of this report.

### **Survey Research Methods**

Six stakeholder groups were identified for surveying: Division Staff, Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Service Providers, General Providers of consumer services, Advocacy groups, Consumers of VR Services, and Workforce Development System Partners. The majority of the groups received a web-based survey. A stratified random sample of Division consumers were surveyed via telephone interview through a contract with the North Carolina State University Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services (CUACS). Providers received a mail survey with a self-addressed postage paid return envelope. All surveys contained a core set of 12 questions which asked respondents to identify the top three needs of people with disabilities related to becoming employed or continuing employment. For each need, respondents were asked to rate the response of the Division for that need, state the major gaps or barriers that the Division faces when fulfilling this need, and what might the Division do to overcome these barriers. Additional questions were asked of each stakeholder group as appropriate.

### **Forces of Change**

Forces of change consider the changes within our Division and broader social and economic changes believed to affect the delivery or outcomes of VR services. State and federal legislation, rapid technological advances, changes in the organization of services for persons with various types of disabilities, and shifts in economic and employment forces are all examples of Forces of Change. These contextual factors are important because they affect, either directly or indirectly, the provision of service to and vocational outcomes of individuals with disabilities.

## **Major DVRS Initiatives during this Needs Assessment Cycle**

During the current needs assessment cycle FFY 2007-2010, DVRS actively concentrated on the following initiatives to improve services, outcomes, and progress on its state plan goals:

- Dual Customer Approach;
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services' Strategic Needs and Assessment Planning (SNAP);
- Recruiting and Retention;
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Phase Out;
- North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) Expansion;
- Medicaid Buy in Program Established through Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) efforts;
- Collaborative Training for Improving Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities;
- VR/IL Concurrent Records of Service for Rehabilitation Engineering Services in the Central Region;
- Initiatives Headed by the CRP-DVRS Steering Committee;
- Initiatives tied to funding provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

## **DVRS Casework Policy Changes October 2007 - September 2010**

During the course of time during which this statewide needs assessment was conducted, the Division had made adjustments to its casework policies in response to the previous needs assessment, and ongoing program evaluation and monitoring efforts. The time period covered during this needs assessment cycle began on the heels of impactful changes to the physical restoration services policy in 2006, which further delineated the types of conditions consumers presented requiring physical restoration services that would make them eligible for those services. The number of individuals qualifying on the basis of the revised policies was greatly reduced, in turn causing a significant reduction in the corresponding service expenditure level.

## **Employment Trends for the State of North Carolina**

From July 2000 to July 2009, North Carolina's population increased by 1.3 million or 16.1%, to just over 9.38 million residents. At the start of the current assessment cycle, from 2007 to 2008, North Carolina was the third-fastest growing state in the country. In October 2007, at the beginning of our Assessment Cycle, the unemployment rate in North Carolina was near a historic low, at 4.8%. During that time, there was relatively little concern regarding the potential availability of jobs for individuals with disabilities. Many of the discussion regarding the vocational outcomes of individuals with disabilities focused on the quality of the jobs available, however, month-by-month, the state's unemployment rate began to rise to a peak of 11.2% in February 2010. The unemployment rate has since declined somewhat, to a preliminary estimate of 9.8% for July 2010.

The largest net decrease in average annual employment across North Carolina occurs from calendar year 2008 to 2009, which presented a considerable challenge for our Division during the current assessment cycle. We apportion the loss in jobs from 2008 to 2009 according to industry, and we compare employment by sector across these two periods. Government jobs in North Carolina, at the local, state, and federal level accounted for 685,913 jobs across multiple NAIC sectors or about 18% of the total 2009 workforce. In terms of net average annual employment, there was very little change in the public sector. Almost all of the 221,592 jobs lost were in the private sector.

The greatest portion of the loss in jobs, about 30%, is due to a loss of 66,831 manufacturing jobs. The construction industry showed a loss of 43,710 jobs from the previous year, accounting for about 20% of

the total decrease. The balance is accounted largely by 24,647 jobs lost in retail; 24,157 administrative and waste services jobs; 13,941 wholesale trade; 10,341 transportation and warehousing jobs; 10,209 other service sector jobs, other than in the public sector; 9,668 hotel and restaurant jobs; 9,286 professional and technical services jobs; and 5,728 jobs in banking and the financial sector.

However, the healthcare and social assistance sector increased by 7,882 jobs, and was comprised of 553,974 workers in 2009, or 14.5% of the North Carolina's total workforce. Public sector administration jobs increased by 2,615 jobs, and accounted for 238,574 jobs, or 6.2% of the total workforce. Another industrial sector with growth was Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, which increased 3,076 jobs in 2009 to 60,285 workers, making up about 1.6% of the total workforce.

### **Demographics of North Carolinians with Disabilities**

Of an estimated 5.8 million non-institutionalized North Carolinians, ages 16 to 65 (excluding those ages 62 and older receiving Social Security retirement income), about 13.48% were reported as having some type of disability; 7.93% with a disability that limits their ability to work; 3.04% with a sensory disability; 8.24% with a physical disability, and 4.96% with a cognitive disability. The prevalence of a significant sensory disability was 0.80%; the prevalence of a significant physical disability was 3.00%, and the prevalence of a significant cognitive disability was 2.11%.

Among North Carolinians with disabilities, employment status and disability-specific work limitations are strongly related, suggesting that "employment disability" is a good indicator of need for VR services. The exception may be among transition age youth, where disability-specific work limitations appear to be under-reported among persons who have not yet entered the workforce. Gender is associated with some of the difference in employment status, but not as much as age, race/ethnicity, and the degree to which area of residence is urban.

Asians and Latinos with disabilities have higher rates of employment and lower prevalence of disability-specific work limitations than Whites and other minority groups. The reverse is true of African Americans and American Indians. The higher rate of employment and lower rate of work-limiting disability associated with Asians and Latinos may be attributable to nativity. Latinos and Asians both have low nativity compared to other race/ethnicity groups, which suggests that a comparatively smaller proportion of Asians and Latinos with work-limiting disabilities are immigrating to the United States. When controlling for nativity, the rate of disability-specific work-limitations for Latinos with disabilities is similar to that of Whites; and the rate for Asians is closer to that of African Americans and American Indians.

Among individuals with disabilities, employment is only slightly higher in areas that are more urban. However, for the subpopulation with disability-specific work limitations the difference is somewhat more notable. The prevalence of disability becomes increasingly higher as the area becomes more rural.

Among individuals with disabilities, there is notable relationship between age and employment status, and also between age and disability-specific work limitations. Disability-specific work limitations are less often reported for younger persons, and this may be because they have yet to enter the workforce. Overall, employment follows a hill-shaped distribution, where individuals with disabilities first enter the workforce at younger ages, and the percent employed then begins to decline as an increasing percentage of individuals with disabilities begin to exit the workforce after age 35. However, "hill-shaped" relationship between employment and age is not as strong for the subpopulation reporting disability-specific work limitations. This suggests that "employment disability" is a good indicator of need for VR services because lack of employment among persons reporting work-limitations is more specifically tied to disability than age (as compared to those with disabilities who do not report work limitations).



#### Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
  - Part B of Title I;
  - Part B of Title VI;
  - each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

#### Division's Response:

NC DVRS estimates **63,526** eligible individuals in the state will be in-service with the VR program during federal fiscal year 2013. This figure is based on a forecast model using data from the current and previous three federal fiscal years. This category includes cases in-service, including those where *non-purchased* services were provided, and cases where *purchased* services were provided and the client was in applicant status, e.g., pre-vocational training, community-based assessment, etc. Further, based on the previous year's activity data, including case service invoice payments, and other service utilization data, NC DVRS estimates a subgroup of **26,600** individuals will be served in an eligible status at the time case services are provided.

NC DVRS estimates expenditures of **\$123,245,806** from Part B Title I funds during FFY 2013. This includes administrative costs, counseling and placement, and case services.

NC DVRS does not expect to implement an order of selection process during FFY 2013. Services will be available for all client service categories.

In FFY 2011, NC DVRS paid for **4,371** individuals to receive supported employment (SE) services at total cost of **\$9,598,052**, and an average cost of **\$2,196** per case. For FFY 2013 an estimated **4,500** individuals with most significant disabilities (MSD) will receive supported employment services funded through Title VI Part B supplemental grant (**\$628,908**) and Title I Part B (basic support grant), for a projected total cost estimate of **\$9,900,000**.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Title I (Except Supported Employment)	Title I	\$113,965,427	59,026	\$1,930
Title VI SE Grant + Title I Supported Employment	Title VI	\$9,900,000	4500	\$2,200
				—
Totals		\$123,865,427	63,526	\$1,949



## **Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities**

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
  - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
  - the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
  - other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

The following goals and priorities of the Division are developed in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council, along with input gathered through the comprehensive statewide needs assessment process spanning FFY 2007-10, public input, and internal organizational needs assessment and planning processes for purposes of effectively carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. In addition, the priorities and goals established support improved performance on standards and indicators.

### **Priority 1: GOAL 1: Employment Outcomes: Increase quantity and quality of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant/most significant disabilities through a dual customer approach.**

Objective 1.1: Develop and maintain quality relationships with businesses in a variety of industries across the state. Objective 1.2: Provide consumers with the services necessary to increase their employment options.

**Measures for Goal 1:** NC DVRS will achieve or exceed the required federal standards for the following indicators:

1.1 The number of persons achieving employment outcomes will equal or exceed the previous year. Baseline FFY 2010: 5961

1.2 The percentage of all individuals who have achieved an employment outcome after exiting the program having received services will equal or exceed 55.80%. Baseline FFY 2010: 56.55%

1.4 Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or Business Enterprise Program employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percent who are individuals with significant disabilities will equal or exceed 62.40. Baseline FFY 2010: 77.18%

1.5 The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the program in competitive employment as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all employed North Carolinians will equal or exceed 0.52. Baseline FFY 2010: 0.50

1.6 Of the individuals who achieve competitive employment, the difference between the percent who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at closure compared to the percent at application. The difference must equal or exceed 53.0. Baseline FFY 2010: 62.29

**Measures for Goal 1 Objective 1.1:** NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

- Number of active business relationship. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012
- Services provided to those businesses. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012
- Industries represented. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012
- Consumers hired and job types. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012

**Measures for Goal 1 Objective 1.2:** NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

- Consumers responding “a lot” to Consumer Satisfaction Survey question 2(c): “Did VR help you search for a job?” Baseline: FFY 2010 41.45%
- Consumers responding “a lot” to Consumer Satisfaction Survey question 2(d): “Did VR help you decide on job choices?” Baseline: FFY 2010 32.82%

**Priority 2: GOAL 2: Access to Services: Increase consumers’ understanding of and access to the Division’s services and programs including their ability to provide feedback.**

Objective 2.1: Increase the availability of information about the VR program within the community.

Objective 2.2: Increase access to program services for potential consumers.

Objective 2.3: Increase access to feedback tools for potential, current and former consumers of services.

**Measures for Goal 2:** NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

- Ratio of individuals who develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to applicants for services. Baseline FFY 2010: Individuals developing new IPEs: 13,948 Applicants: 25,202 Ratio: 55.34%
- Consumer feedback response rates: Mailed consumer satisfaction survey response rate (adjusted for undeliverable): Baseline: FFY 2010: 15.01%
- Public Input forums held & total attendance. Baseline: to be established FFY 2011

- Individuals providing input through web-based input options. Baseline: to be established FFY 2011
- Number of cases served by the Client Assistance Program regarding the NC DVRS VR program: Baseline SFY 2009-2010: 135

**Measures for Goal 2 Objective 2.1:** NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

- Public Website traffic. Baseline: To be established FFY 2012
- Number of presentations to various stakeholder groups. Baseline: To be established FFY 2012

**Measures for Goal 2 Objective 2.2:**

- Number of applicants Baseline FFY 2010: 25,202 Reference: Percent of total closures in FFY 10 with previous closures in past 36 months: 19.05%
- Applicants per referral source category other than self-referred.

**Measures for Goal 2 Objective 2.3:**

- Number of feedback channels available to consumers FFY 2010: 1) mail-based consumer satisfaction survey; 2) web-based e-mail links for feedback; 3) SRC-VR jointly conducted input sessions; 4) public input sessions for the state plan 5) Client Assistance Program
- Mailed consumer satisfaction survey response rate (adjusted for undeliverable): Baseline: FFY 2010: 15.01%

**Priority 3: GOAL 3: Service Quality and Uniformity: NC DVRS shall improve the quality and uniformity of the services it provides.** Objective 3.1: Maintain a customer focus in the planning and provision of services.

Objective 3.2: Ensure statewide uniformity of case management and policy implementation.

**Measures for Goal 3:** NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:\

- Percentage of consumers responding "excellent" or "above average" on Consumer Satisfaction Survey Q9: "Overall, how would you rate your experience with NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) program?" Baseline: FFY 2010: 67.67%
- Percentage of consumers responding "excellent" or "above average" on Consumer Satisfaction Survey Q3: "How would you rate the response time of services provided by VR staff?" Baseline: FFY 2010: 63.97%

**Measures for Goal 3 Objective 3.1:**

- Percentage of consumers responding "Yes" to Consumer Satisfaction Survey Q4: "Did your counselor inform you that if you had a concern about services that you could contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP)?" Baseline: FFY 2010: 49.69% (33.05% did not recall)
- Percentage of consumers responding "Yes" on Consumer Satisfaction Survey Q5: "Did your counselor inform you about your right to appeal agency decisions with which you disagree?" Baseline: FFY 2010: 57.54% (24.04% did not recall)
- Percentage of consumers indicating that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" on Consumer Satisfaction Survey Q7: "How satisfied were you with your level of involvement in your rehabilitation program (for example deciding on job goals, selecting available services, choosing providers, etc.)?" Baseline: FFY 2010: 80.55%
- Service Timeliness Measures: referral response; eligibility determination; IPE development; major service initiation
- Casework quality measures as tracked through Quality Development Specialist case reviews

#### **Measures for Goal 3 Objective 3.2:**

- Quality and uniformity measures as tracked through Quality Development Specialist case reviews using FFY 2010 baseline data
- Case service expenditure data by region using FFY 2010 baseline data
- Average case length data by consumer satisfaction survey respondent group using FFY 2010 baseline data

#### **Priority 4: GOAL 4: Resources: Sustain efforts necessary to retain, train and recruit qualified staff and provide or develop resources necessary to carry out the Division's goals, priorities, and services for individuals with disabilities and our business customers statewide.**

Objective 4.1: Continue to recruit qualified staff with skills critical to the delivery of all service components of the Division.

Objective 4.2: Provide ongoing training to staff in order to maintain a high level of service effectiveness.

Objective 4.3: Increase the retention of highly skilled staff throughout the Division.

Objective 4.4: Identify and develop resources that are critical to the delivery of all service components of the Division.

#### **Measures for Goal 4:**

- Division's turnover rate. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012
- Average Division-funded, coordinated, or administered training hours offered per staff annually. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012

•Staff survey results pertaining to training and perceived availability of/access to resources needed to provide services effectively to consumers and business customers. Baseline: to be established FFY 2012

**Measures for Goal 4 Objective 4.1:** •Number of vacancies during the last FFY. Baseline: To be established FFY 2011

**Measures for Goal 4 Objective 4.2:** •Number of staff attending a training session in the last FFY broken down by position type. Baseline: To be established FFY 2012

**Measures for Goal 4 Objective 4.3:** •Number of vacancies, average length of vacancies. Baseline: To be established FFY 2012

**Measures for Goal 4 Objective 4.4:** •Total value of and number of different sources of third party funding or grants, beyond the basic support grants, applied toward the provision of vocational rehabilitation and related services. Baseline: To be established FFY 2012

**Priority 5: GOAL 5: Service Equity: Promote equity in the service delivery and the quality of job outcomes for our consumers.**

Objective 5.1: Increase outreach to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Objective 5.2: Ensure that all vocational rehabilitation services are available and the decision of the appropriateness of each service for a consumer is made without regard to race, gender, disability type, age or geographic location of the consumer.

Objective 5.3: Continuously improve services to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Objective 5.4: Continuously improve the methods and processes by which the employment-related needs of individuals with disabilities within the state are comprehensively assessed.

**Measures for Goal 5:** NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators: RSA Standard and Indicator 1.5 (wage ratio) for identified unserved and underserved populations identified in the statewide comprehensive needs assessment. Baseline FFY 2010 data

**Measure for Goal 5 Objective 5.1:** Applications for the Vocational Rehabilitation program by group. Baseline FFY 2010 data

**Measure for Goal 5 Objective 5.2:** Results of Question 7 from Consumer Satisfaction Survey for groups identified as unserved or underserved in the statewide comprehensive needs assessment: "How satisfied are you with your level of involvement in your rehabilitation program?" Baseline FFY 2010 data

**Measure for Objective 5.3:** Results of Question 9 from Consumer Satisfaction Survey for groups identified as unserved or underserved in the statewide comprehensive needs assessment: "Overall, how would you rate your experience with the North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) program?" Baseline FFY 2010 data

#### **Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection**

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

This agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.



#### **Attachment 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds**

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

Title VI, Part B funds are distributed to supported employment programs with the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (The Division). These community rehabilitation programs provide services to consumers with severe and persistent mental illness, mental retardation, traumatic head injury, autism, cerebral palsy, and other developmental disabilities. In addition, other eligible individuals determined to be most significantly disabled, and who require intensive training and long-term support (extended services) in order to obtain and maintain successful employment outcome are also served. The Division annually serves over 4,000 consumers with the most significant disabilities within the supported employment (SE) program. The goals and priorities for the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Act are to promote the expansion of new supported employment programs and to address the unmet and underserved areas of the state as it relates to supported employment services by the expansion of new programs where needed. More specifically, goals for the supported employment program for FFY 2013 include:

**Supported Employment Goal 1:** Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive supported employment services.

**Supported Employment Goal 2:** Identify and begin implementing practices that can increase the successful closure rate of individuals receiving supported employment services.

**Supported Employment Goal 3:** In search of improved supported employment services delivery models and practices, continue assessing the positive components gained through experience with the ARRA-funded innovative collaborative projects that concluded with FFY 2011.

**Supported Employment Goal 4:** Support increased training/qualification requirements for job coaches and their supervisory staff. Collaboratively increase supported employment training to NC DVRS rehabilitation counselors and Community Rehabilitation Program direct service staff through the addition of a web-based (and other forms of) curriculum development.

**Supported Employment Goal 5:** Continue collaboration with the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services to secure reporting of the expenditures of the Long Term Support service definition in order to assure consistent administration of these funds.

## **Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies**

This attachment should include required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)).

Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

### **Division's Response:**

#### **A. Establishment of Goals and Priorities and How the Strategies and Substrategies Interrelate and Support their Achievement:**

Following a thorough analysis of the results of the 2010 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Division and its SRC, jointly established the prioritized goals below for the period 2012-14:

**Priority 1: GOAL 1: Employment Outcomes: Increase quantity and quality of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant/most significant disabilities through a dual customer approach.**

**Priority 2: GOAL 2: Access to Services: Increase consumers' understanding of and access to the Division's services and programs including their ability to provide feedback.**

**Priority 3: GOAL 3: Service Quality and Uniformity: NC DVRS shall improve the quality and uniformity of the services it provides.**

**Priority 4: GOAL 4: Resources: Sustain efforts necessary to retain, train and recruit qualified staff and provide or develop resources necessary to carry out the Division's goals, priorities, and services for individuals with disabilities and our business customers statewide.**

**Priority 5: GOAL 5: Service Equity: Promote equity in the service delivery and the quality of job outcomes for our consumers.**

These goals were also highly influenced by the longstanding overarching principles reinforced within the Rehabilitation Act:

- Expand and improve services to all individuals with disabilities;
- Ensure that the Division collaborates and assists other entities/agencies within the statewide workforce development system in order to respond to and work with individuals with disabilities;
- Assure the broadest use of assistive technology services/devices in all phases of rehabilitation;
- Address identified barriers relative to equitable access and participation by individuals with disabilities in all state vocational rehabilitation programs/services;
- Improve the Division's performance on the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

#### **B. Strategies and Substrategy Development and Management of Activities to Support Their Execution:**

Following the development of the goals above, workgroups were established to develop strategies and substrategies that are to serve guide coordinated activities over this time period to help the Division to make substantial measurable progress toward the five prioritized goals. The separate dedicated workgroups are charged with developing and maintaining an action plan with timelines, to help coordinate and monitor the progress of the activities related to the strategies and substrategies.

#### **C. Strategies and Substrategies:**

The following strategies and substrategies are guiding the Division's efforts and activities related to its achievement of its goals and priorities, supporting its innovation and expansion activities, and facilitating access to the services of the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs during the time period FFY 2012-2014 :

**PRIORITY 1 GOAL 1: Employment Outcomes:** Increase quantity and quality of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant/most significant disabilities through a dual customer approach.

**Objective 1.1:** Develop and maintain quality relationships with businesses in a variety of industries across the state. Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 1 Objective 1.1:

**Strategy 1.1a:** Leverage existing business relationships.

Substrategy 1.1a1: Examine current business activities to ascertain what is being gained by the Division from these relationships.

Substrategy 1.1a2: Emphasize staff engagement in follow up activities with current business relationships.

**Strategy 1.1b:** Identify opportunities to create new business relationships across various employment fields and geographic areas.

Substrategy 1.1b1: Ensure coordination of Division staff across geographic areas.

Substrategy 1.1b2: Identify and partner with consumers who are willing to relocate elsewhere in the state for a job opportunity.

Substrategy 1.1b3: Establish the Western Regional Employment Specialist position.

Substrategy 1.1b4: Fill the Statewide Employment Specialist position.

Substrategy 1.1b5: Create an employer portal through the BEAM system that allows them to Post job openings as well as view profiles of consumers who are looking for employment.

Substrategy 1.1b6: Revise and fully develop the employer page of the public website.

**Strategy 1.1c:** Determine the effectiveness of the services NC DVRS provides to its current business customers.

Substrategy 1.1c1: Review the design and implementation of the Business Services survey.

Substrategy 1.1c2: Establish systematic tracking of follow up services.

**Strategy 1.1d:** Continue to assist staff in developing and maintaining skills in the area of business relationship building.

**Strategy 1.1e:** Develop and implement a structured system to track business activities at the statewide and unit office levels.

**Objective 1.2:** Provide consumers with the services necessary to increase their employment options.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 1 Objective 1.2:

**Strategy 1.2a:** Assist consumers in making informed decisions regarding employment fields that have demand for workers, including the option for self-employment.

Substrategy 1.2a1: Training in and provision of information to staff and consumers on local and state labor markets, including career fields with high demand for workers.

Substrategy 1.2a2: Increased collaboration with the Employment Security Commission and its local JobLink Career Centers.

Substrategy 1.2a3: Systematically measure consumer skills, interests and abilities utilizing a variety of methods, based on the consumers' needs.

Substrategy 1.2a4: Reallocate resources to enable continued operation, support and activities of statewide small business consultant.

Strategy 1.2b: Increase and improve training opportunities available to consumers.

Substrategy 1.2b1: Expand job search skills training to more consumers, including those pursuing a Post- secondary degree.

Substrategy 1.2b2: Target cases who are in their last semester of school for on-the-job training and internships.

Substrategy 1.2b3: Emphasize consistent use of transitioning planning for post-secondary students statewide.

Substrategy 1.2b4: Partner and expand collaboration with career development offices at colleges and universities statewide.

Substrategy 1.2b5: Make On-the-Job Training experiences available to a greater number of consumers.

Substrategy 1.2b6: Target internship opportunities with employers that NC DVRS has relationships with.

Strategy 1.2c: Increase and improve supported employment and work adjustment training opportunities for consumers.

Substrategy 1.2c1: Work with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), TACE, and other resources to develop training opportunities to increase the quality of services available statewide.

Substrategy 1.2c2: Work with NC MH/DD/SAS employment specialist to help optimize the amount of funding made available and used for long term follow along services required by individuals receiving supported employment services.

Substrategy 1.2c3: Ensure that rehabilitation technology is readily available to CRPs to meet the identified needs of consumers.

Strategy 1.2d: Increase and improve transportation options available to consumers.

Substrategy 1.2d1: Increase NC DVRS' involvement with the NC DOT state and regional planning processes in regards to transportation of people with disabilities.

Substrategy 1.2d2: Through collaboration with NC DOT, local and regional entities to make employment related transportation needs of people with disabilities known.

Substrategy 1.2d3: Continued education of counselors on transportation options available to consumers including adaptive vehicle modifications.

Strategy 1.2e: Identify best practices for training and employment for targeted populations as identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Substrategy 1.2e1: Continue to work with TACE centers to identify and implement best practices.

Substrategy 1.2e2: Continue collaborations with programs focusing employment initiatives for youth transitioning from school to work.

Substrategy 1.2e3: Continue to identify and apply best practices that will increase employment success of individuals with disabilities transitioning from a corrections environment or have experienced difficulties obtaining employment because of previous convictions.

Substrategy 1.2e4: Through ongoing educational and process streamlining efforts, increase the utilization of appropriate rehabilitation technologies to enable individuals with significant/most significant disabilities increased chances of employment success.

**PRIORITY 2: GOAL 2: Access to Services:** Increase consumers' understanding of and access to the Division's services and programs including their ability to provide feedback.

**Objective 2.1:** Increase the availability of information about the VR program within the community.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 2 Objective 2.1:

Strategy 2.1a: Increase the amount and quality of information available through the Division's public website, including the approved State Plan and casework policies.

Strategy 2.1b: Enhance the availability and accessibility of marketing materials including the availability of alternate formats that clearly explain VR services.

Substrategy 2.1b1: As resources allow, develop accessible video presentation(s) presenting information about the VR program and services in an interesting, clear and concise manner.

Strategy 2.1c: Educate current referral sources about the VR program and its services and explore ways to expand referral sources.

Strategy 2.1d: Increase information about the Division and its services through systematic outreach to groups such as employers, consumers, advocates, school systems, and workforce development partners.

Strategy 2.1e: Increase the public's knowledge of the VR program through systematically inviting outside partners and referral sources to link to the Division's public website.

**Objective 2.2:** Increase access to program services for potential consumers.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 2 Objective 2.2:

Strategy 2.2a: Explore the need for customer friendly practices such as expanded office hours and alternate locations for appointments.

Strategy 2.2b: Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Division's current intake processes.

**Objective 2.3:** Increase access to feedback tools for potential, current and former consumers of services.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 2 Objective 2.3:

Strategy 2.3a: Expand the methods by which the consumer satisfaction survey is administered in order to allow consumers to respond via a medium that is accessible to them and encourages their participation.

Strategy 2.3b: Solicit feedback from consumers, advocates and other stakeholder groups on the employment related needs of individuals with disabilities through the triennial statewide comprehensive needs assessment.

Strategy 2.3c: Partner with the State Rehabilitation Council to solicit consumer and stakeholder feedback through regularly scheduled public forums and web-based venues.

**PRIORITY 3 GOAL 3: Service Quality and Uniformity:** NC DVRS shall improve the quality and uniformity of the services it provides.

**Objective 3.1:** Maintain a customer focus in the planning and provision of services. Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 3 Objective 3.1:

Strategy 3.1a: Staff demonstrates the five key customer satisfaction attributes as defined by NC DHHS: job knowledge, willingness to help others, responsiveness, being respectful of others, and effective communication.

Strategy 3.1b: Consumers are involved in the planning and execution of their rehabilitation program to the extent that they are willing and able to participate.

Strategy 3.1c: Consumers are consistently and accurately informed of their rights as consumers.

Strategy 3.1d: Increase training initiatives in the area of ethics.

Objective 3.2: Ensure statewide uniformity of case management and policy implementation.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 3 Objective 3.2:

Strategy 3.2a: Develop a quality assurance plan reflective of the recent centralization of quality development activities.

**PRIORITY 4 GOAL 4: Resources:** Sustain efforts necessary to retain, train and recruit qualified staff and provide or develop resources necessary to carry out the Division's goals, priorities, and services for individuals with disabilities and our business customers statewide.

Objective 4.1: Continue to recruit qualified staff with skills critical to the delivery of all service components of the Division.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.1:

Strategy 4.1a: Increase targeted recruiting efforts in areas of identified staffing needs.

Substrategy 4.1a1: Increase targeted recruiting efforts as required to maintain deaf counselor staffing needs to effectively serve individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing statewide.

Substrategy 4.1a2: Increase recruiting and other efforts to increase the availability of qualified vocational evaluators necessary to serve the Division's consumers statewide.

Substrategy 4.1a3: Reallocate a position to allow small business consultant to continue the consultation to Rehabilitation Counselors.

Substrategy 4.1a4: Further explore and develop a plan to re-institute a physical disabilities specialist position, should the funding environment allow, or explore other options of providing staff the desired level of guidance and analysis in areas of new and developing methods of providing consumers effective and fiscally responsible physical restoration services.

Strategy 4.1b: Effectively utilize information obtained from the system for tracking applicants who decline employment with the Division as to reason.

Objective 4.2: Provide ongoing training to staff in order to maintain a high level of service effectiveness.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.2:

Strategy 4.2a: Develop and maintain a more systematic professional development system for new and experienced staff featuring areas of focus as identified through collected evidence.

Substrategy 4.2a1: Continue to develop and regularly offer training to staff on how to more effectively serve specific disability populations.

Substrategy 4.2a2: Offer online training options to staff that are available on-demand.

Substrategy 4.2a3: Routinely conduct gap analyses of the skill sets of recent graduate hires, to determine what additional skills are needed to increase effectiveness.

Substrategy 4.2a4: Continue to offer caseload management training.

Substrategy 4.2a5: Offer continuous support and training to Division management.

Substrategy 4.2a6: Conduct the training needs assessment on a biennial basis in order to maintain the most current information on staff development needs.

Objective 4.3: Increase the retention of highly skilled staff throughout the Division.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.3:

Strategy 4.3a: Explore alternative work arrangements/options that offer more flexibility to staff in their ability to serve consumers safely and effectively. Strategy 4.3b: Develop an action plan to accommodate the large number of anticipated staff retirements within the Division.

Objective 4.4: Identify and develop resources that are critical to the delivery of all service components of the Division.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.4:

Strategy 4.4a: Effectively coordinate and leverage existing resources.

Substrategy 4.4a1: Continue to utilize staff in a flexible manner that meets local office needs while exploring new staffing patterns that effectively meet business requirements.

Substrategy 4.4a2: Review and update staff job descriptions.

Strategy 4.4b: Expand resources through partnering with entities that can positively impact the quality and effectiveness of services.

Strategy 4.4c: Pursue additional funding as needed through grant opportunities that align with the Division's established goals and priorities.

Strategy 4.4d: Conduct a critical analysis of the Division's leased office spaces to determine if they effectively meet the needs of both staff and consumers.

**PRIORITY 5 GOAL 5: Service Equity: Promote equity in the service delivery and the quality of job outcomes for our consumers.**

Objective 5.1: Increase outreach to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.1:

Strategy 5.1a: Based on the results of the most recently completed Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Division will focus on the following identified unserved and underserved populations of people with disabilities: women, older workers, those living in rural areas, individuals with physical disabilities, Native American Indians, and individuals with mental illness.

Strategy 5.1b: The Division will strategically provide information about its services within the working and residential communities with the largest concentrations of unserved and underserved populations within the state.

Strategy 5.1c: Division will work to establish a collaborative working relationship with culturally-oriented groups, including any economic organizations or chambers of commerce to increase successful employment of minorities and other unserved and underserved populations within North Carolina.

Strategy 5.1d: Better meet the communication needs of consumers with Limited English Proficiency.

Objective 5.2: Ensure that all vocational rehabilitation services are available and the decision of the appropriateness of each service for a consumer is made without regard to race, gender, disability type, age or geographic location of the consumer.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.2:

Strategy 5.2a: Increase efforts to ensure that information about all vocational rehabilitation services are made available to every consumer so that they may be an active participant in the development of their plan for services.

Strategy 5.2b: Continually improve in the uniformity of policy implementation throughout the state.

Objective 5.3: Continuously improve services to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.3:

Strategy 5.3a: Based on the results of the most recently completed Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Division will focus on the following identified unserved and underserved populations of people with disabilities: women, older workers, those living in rural areas, individuals with physical disabilities, Native American Indians, and individuals with mental illness.

Strategy 5.3b: Provide training for counselors regarding effective practices in serving individuals identified as unserved or underserved.

Strategy 5.3c: Increase the Division's collaboration with organizations and agencies that serve and advocate for the identified unserved or underserved populations.

Substrategy 5.3c1: Establish a pilot program using peers as a means of providing support to consumers in areas where regular supports are required to increase successful employment outcomes.

Objective 5.4: Continuously improve the methods and processes by which the employment-related needs of individuals with disabilities within the state are comprehensively assessed.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.4:

Strategy 5.4a: Implement continuous data collection and analysis of variables that affect the successful provision of services for all disability groups. Strategy 5.4b: Plan and implement the Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for 2013.

#### **Requirement:**

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

#### **Division's Response**

Assistive Technology services and devices are provided to eligible individuals statewide who require them. Rehabilitation technology and assistive technology services are sponsored and provided to the degree necessary to complete the rehabilitation program. Included are services and devices which can



supplement and enhance an individual's functions such as adapted computer access, augmentative communication, specialized seating and mobility, vehicle modifications, and services which can have an impact on the environment, such as accessibility, job re-design, work site modification and residence modification. Application of the available engineering and assistive technology services and technologies is important when making determinations of eligibility particularly for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. Rehabilitation engineering evaluations and services are not subject to an individual's financial eligibility; however, devices, equipment and modifications recommended by the engineer are subject to financial eligibility. Applicants during the assessment phase, and consumers determined to be eligible for services, who are in need of and can benefit from rehabilitation engineering services, devices and assistive technology services can be referred to providers of these services, and these services can assist to assist with assessment processes. Presently within the state, these services are made available statewide through the Division's 17 Rehabilitation Engineers in addition to 12 Assistive Technology Consultants, a Funding Specialist, and a Consumer AT Resource/Information Specialist, Program Director and Program Specialist for Rehabilitation Technology, all of which comprise the Division's NC Rehabilitation Technology Program. Additional assistive technology services are available through outside Assistive Technology Suppliers and Providers.

The Division is fortunate to have the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program as a vital program component. The program readily expands access and services to individuals served within the VR program, and supports the Division mission of increasing independence for clients in the home, post-secondary school and work setting. In addition, this affords clients of the Division with fast access to the programs array of services which includes: technical expertise in selecting the most appropriate device; hands-on demonstration & try-out of low tech & high tech devices for people with disabilities; information on a variety of technology options; funding resource information and strategies; short-term loan of equipment to consumers, families and professionals who serve them; training to consumers, families and professionals; technical assistance to local organizations, schools, and programs to expand assistive technology local service delivery capacity; awareness & outreach activities to inform the public about equipment & devices people with disabilities can use for greater independence.

**Requirement:**

Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

**Division's Response:**

The Division employs several strategies to increase outreach activities to various minority groups with the goal of also reaching those individuals with the most significant disabilities. The major thrust of activities is to go where the minority individuals and groups are contrasted with expecting them to come to Vocational Rehabilitation or to know how to access services without assistance. Management and staff on the local, regional, and state levels continue to identify minority or ethnic groups in their community along with identifying group leaders, common meeting places, preferred ways for accessing information, and neighborhood/community resources that can be used and developed to bring rehabilitation services to more minority individuals with the most significant disabilities.

As there are numerous diverse cultures throughout North Carolina, staff are encouraged to concentrate on the groups in their particular area. The specific groups of considerable interest include: North Carolina Native Americans, Hispanic/Latino populations, African and Asian populations. The Division has created a staff position that is dedicated to developing and furthering initiatives for outreach to Hispanic/Latino

populations. This individual routinely travels to the communities where there are high concentrations of the targeted populations and provides marketing information to their meetings and carnivals. The Division also has active program specialists who provide outreach to advocacy organizations serving individuals in the following areas: Mental Illness and Substance abuse, Disabled Veterans, Developmental Disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and Deaf/Communication Disorders.

Specific Objectives and Strategies Pertaining to these activities are included within the State Plan Goals effective FFY 2012-2014:

**Objective 5.1:** Increase outreach to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

**Strategies and Substrategies in support of Objective 5.1:**

**Strategy 5.1a:** Based on the results of the most recently completed Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Division will focus on the following identified unserved and underserved populations of people with disabilities: women, older workers, those living in rural areas, individuals with physical disabilities, Native American Indians, and individuals with mental illness.

**Strategy 5.1b:** The Division will strategically provide information about its services within the working and residential communities with the largest concentrations of unserved and underserved populations within the state.

**Strategy 5.1c:** Division will work to establish a collaborative working relationship with culturally-oriented groups, including any economic organizations or chambers of commerce to increase successful employment of minorities and other unserved and underserved populations within North Carolina.

**Strategy 5.1d:** Better meet the communication needs of consumers with Limited English Proficiency.

**Requirement:**

If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

**Division's Response:**

The Division continues to utilize two advisory workgroups or committees comprised of supported employment, other community rehabilitation program providers along with Division staff as an effective method to identify and update the needs, goals, and priorities as they pertain to community rehabilitation programs. This group annually establishes goals and makes recommendations to the NC DVRS Director regarding the directions in which the community rehabilitation programs should continue to develop and grow. Another venue that has effectively promoted healthy dialog between the community rehabilitation programs and the Division is the regional CRP summit. Typically annually or semi-annually, as funding permits, regional summits are held where training and discussion of topics of mutual interest to both the CRP community and the Division.

Community rehabilitation programs are evaluated annually by the Division's local, regional, and state management in order to determine the appropriate level of service outcomes for purchase for the next funding cycle. The decision is based primarily upon need of consumers and availability of financial resources. The programs are also evaluated annually by the Division's local, regional, and state management relative to program capital and staffing needs for new and innovative programs. Priorities are developed and many of these needs are met through the Establishment Authority (the authority which makes funds available for the establishment of community rehabilitation programs) contingent upon the Division having funds available to do so.

The need for new community rehabilitation programs is also assessed continually, with special emphasis as part of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment process. New community rehabilitation programs are created, at least in part, to assist the Division in meeting identified needs and are typically generated through local and sometimes legislative initiatives. In these cases, the Division can help expand and improve the programs through establishment projects as funds permit.

One important activity the Division is currently working on which will launch during FFY 2013 is migrating from older legacy systems to a new electronic case management system which will require a lot of effort on behalf of the Division's fiscal and program staff, community rehabilitation program representatives, and developers. The Division is looking to make the process of receiving documentation and invoicing for services as paperless as possible.

### **Requirement:**

Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

### **Division's Response:**

At this time, the Division has met all primary and secondary indicators with the exception of Indicator 1.5 the ratio of the hourly wages of those successfully exiting the NC DVRS program to the NC average hourly wage for all employed individuals.

The Division realizes that in order to perform better on this indicator, it must help consumers to prepare higher paying positions, typically obtained through increased education, specifically through more individuals successfully completing their post-secondary degrees, then following through with jobs that match their employment potential. It is currently looking for ways to adjust its programs, services, and supports to accomplish this in a fiscally-responsible manner.

Further, the Division's commitment to this issue is reflected in the elevated standing of importance that obtaining quality jobs for its consumers has and has made pursuit of this goal/priority 1: Employment Outcomes: Increase quantity and quality of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant/most significant disabilities through a dual customer approach. Beyond increasing consumers' participation in career-oriented post-secondary education/training, some of the other strategies that the Division has established under this goal are to develop and build quality relationships with businesses that offer strong salaries and benefits and to continue offering the internship services, which, compared to an OJT experience, are geared more toward individuals who have completed their specialized training and need work experience to get their careers established. This service has been very well received by staff and consumers and we expect to continue the service.

Another strategy that the Division is employing to increase the earning potential of individuals who have entrepreneurial skills is through the support the Division has made available through a dedicated Small Business Specialist on staff who helps support staff and consumers in their assessment of this option as a fit and when it is mutually determined as such, coordination of local resources and ongoing supports for the consumer pursuing this option.

Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

NC DVRS has relatively strong ties with other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The partnerships and linkages that were established prior to the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 1998 have served as a stable and effective foundation for effective service delivery. Cooperative agreements or memorandum of agreements have been established with all local area workforce boards. The agreements provide for the following strategies:

- Provision of inter-component staff training and technical assistance with regard to:
  - (a) the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for vocational rehabilitation services; and
  - (b) the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities receiving workforce development system services in all of the states JobLink Career Centers in the state through the promotion of accessibility; the use of non-discriminatory policies and procedures; the provision of reasonable accommodations; auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology for persons with disabilities.
- Identification of service delivery strategies by the Division within the JobLink Career Centers and other components of the workforce development system.
- Development and implementation of information systems that link all components of the statewide workforce development system; that link the components to other electronic networks including non-visual electronic networks; and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce development activities.
- Further development and use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures when feasible, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines.
- Establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement and carry out any other activities that Vocational Rehabilitation and the employers determine to be appropriate.
- Identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, along with specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce development system with regards to paying for certain services (consistent with state law and federal requirements).

The rehabilitation needs of individuals who are served through components of the statewide workforce development system other than through the public vocational rehabilitation program will be updated and reassessed through the methodology outlined in Attachment 4.11(a) of the State Plan. One of the ongoing goals for both the vocational rehabilitation and JobLink system is to continue to refine the processes and procedures for JobLink staff to better determine which consumers with disabilities utilizing the centers should be referred to NC DVRS rather than being served through the JobLink. First it is necessary to determine which consumers served by the JobLink system have a disability. Strategies to improve this will be further explored via mutual collaboration between the Division and JobLink Career Centers to establish training for its staff.

The Division enthusiastically participated in the development of JobLink Career Centers and continues to be an active partner throughout North Carolina to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access core workforce services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff are represented on the state level as well as on local boards. The Division remains an active partner with the workforce development system and supports the JobLinks concept to provide more universal access to placement and training services; to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services; and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services. Through local agreements, direct service delivery staff within the Division have gained more access to comprehensive Division of Employment Security data, which enables faster service delivery and cross-agency collaboration. Nearly all NC DVRS offices have obtained access to these databases to date.

In every community where there are JobLink Career Centers, local Vocational Rehabilitation offices provide counseling staff, vocational evaluators, human resource placement specialists and other staff as appropriate to meet the needs of those individuals who enter a JobLink Career Center and require the specialized services offered by Vocational Rehabilitation. Specific arrangements and staffing patterns by Vocational Rehabilitation staff vary from site to site depending on local needs and agreements. Enhanced working relationships with key partners of the workforce development system such as Social Services, NC Division of Employment Security, NC Community College System, and other local partnerships allow all the agencies to better meet the needs of the individual.

The number of individuals served or identified through components of the workforce development system is increasing. Local Division management represents Vocational Rehabilitation on the local workforce development boards while staff also actively participate in planning, development, and service delivery with both individual component agencies or within the JobLink Career Centers already established.

State Level meetings with identified partners of the workforce development system continue to promote effective collaboration and equal access to services by individuals with disabilities.

**Requirement:**

Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
- support innovation and expansion activities; and
- overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

**Division's Response:**

The following strategies below will be employed in the Division's efforts and activities related to the goals and priorities effective FFY 2012-2014, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the NC DVRS service program and its supported employment services program:

**PRIORITY 1 GOAL 1: Employment Outcomes:** Increase quantity and quality of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant/most significant disabilities through a dual customer approach.

**Objective 1.1:** Develop and maintain quality relationships with businesses in a variety of industries across the state. Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 1 Objective 1.1:

**Strategy 1.1a:** Leverage existing business relationships.

Substrategy 1.1a1: Examine current business activities to ascertain what is being gained by the Division from these relationships.

Substrategy 1.1a2: Emphasize staff engagement in follow up activities with current business relationships.

**Strategy 1.1b:** Identify opportunities to create new business relationships across various employment fields and geographic areas.

Substrategy 1.1b1: Ensure coordination of Division staff across geographic areas.

Substrategy 1.1b2: Identify and partner with consumers who are willing to relocate elsewhere in the

state for a job opportunity.

Substrategy 1.1b3: Establish the Western Regional Employment Specialist position.

Substrategy 1.1b4: Fill the Statewide Employment Specialist position.

Substrategy 1.1b5: Create an employer portal through the BEAM system that allows them to Post job openings as well as view profiles of consumers who are looking for employment.

Substrategy 1.1b6: Revise and fully develop the employer page of the public website.

Strategy 1.1c: Determine the effectiveness of the services NC DVRS provides to its current business customers.

Substrategy 1.1c1: Review the design and implementation of the Business Services survey.

Substrategy 1.1c2: Establish systematic tracking of follow up services.

Strategy 1.1d: Continue to assist staff in developing and maintaining skills in the area of business relationship building.

Strategy 1.1e: Develop and implement a structured system to track business activities at the statewide and unit office levels.

Objective 1.2: Provide consumers with the services necessary to increase their employment options.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 1 Objective 1.2:

Strategy 1.2a: Assist consumers in making informed decisions regarding employment fields that have demand for workers, including the option for self-employment.

Substrategy 1.2a1: Training in and provision of information to staff and consumers on local and state labor markets, including career fields with high demand for workers.

Substrategy 1.2a2: Increased collaboration with the Employment Security Commission and its local JobLink Career Centers.

Substrategy 1.2a3: Systematically measure consumer skills, interests and abilities utilizing a variety of methods, based on the consumers' needs.

Substrategy 1.2a4: Reallocate resources to enable continued operation, support and activities of statewide small business consultant.

Strategy 1.2b: Increase and improve training opportunities available to consumers.

Substrategy 1.2b1: Expand job search skills training to more consumers, including those pursuing a Post-secondary degree.

Substrategy 1.2b2: Target cases who are in their last semester of school for on-the-job training and internships.

Substrategy 1.2b3: Emphasize consistent use of transitioning planning for post-secondary students statewide.

Substrategy 1.2b4: Partner and expand collaboration with career development offices at colleges and universities statewide.

Substrategy 1.2b5: Make On-the-Job Training experiences available to a greater number of consumers.

Substrategy 1.2b6: Target internship opportunities with employers that NC DVRS has relationships with.

Strategy 1.2c: Increase and improve supported employment and work adjustment training opportunities for consumers.

Substrategy 1.2c1: Work with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), TACE, and other resources to develop training opportunities to increase the quality of services available statewide.

Substrategy 1.2c2: Work with NC MH/DD/SAS employment specialist to help optimize the amount of funding made available and used for long term follow along services required by individuals receiving supported employment services.

Substrategy 1.2c3: Ensure that rehabilitation technology is readily available to CRPs to meet the identified needs of consumers.

Strategy 1.2d: Increase and improve transportation options available to consumers.

Substrategy 1.2d1: Increase NC DVRS' involvement with the NC DOT state and regional planning processes in regards to transportation of people with disabilities.

Substrategy 1.2d2: Through collaboration with NC DOT, local and regional entities to make employment related transportation needs of people with disabilities known.

Substrategy 1.2d3: Continued education of counselors on transportation options available to consumers including adaptive vehicle modifications.

Strategy 1.2e: Identify best practices for training and employment for targeted populations as identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Substrategy 1.2e1: Continue to work with TACE centers to identify and implement best practices.

Substrategy 1.2e2: Continue collaborations with programs focusing employment initiatives for youth transitioning from school to work.

Substrategy 1.2e3: Continue to identify and apply best practices that will increase employment success of individuals with disabilities transitioning from a corrections environment or have experienced difficulties obtaining employment because of previous convictions.

Substrategy 1.2e4: Through ongoing educational and process streamlining efforts, increase the utilization of appropriate rehabilitation technologies to enable individuals with significant/most significant disabilities increased chances of employment success.

PRIORITY 2: GOAL 2: Access to Services: Increase consumers' understanding of and access to the Division's services and programs including their ability to provide feedback.

Objective 2.1: Increase the availability of information about the VR program within the community.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 2 Objective 2.1:

Strategy 2.1a: Increase the amount and quality of information available through the Division's public website, including the approved State Plan and casework policies.

Strategy 2.1b: Enhance the availability and accessibility of marketing materials including the availability of alternate formats that clearly explain VR services.

Substrategy 2.1b1: As resources allow, develop accessible video presentation(s) presenting information about the VR program and services in an interesting, clear and concise manner.

Strategy 2.1c: Educate current referral sources about the VR program and its services and explore ways to expand referral sources.

Strategy 2.1d: Increase information about the Division and its services through systematic outreach to groups such as employers, consumers, advocates, school systems, and workforce development partners.

Strategy 2.1e: Increase the public's knowledge of the VR program through systematically inviting outside partners and referral sources to link to the Division's public website.

Objective 2.2: Increase access to program services for potential consumers.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 2 Objective 2.2:

Strategy 2.2a: Explore the need for customer friendly practices such as expanded office hours and alternate locations for appointments.

Strategy 2.2b: Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Division's current intake processes.

Objective 2.3: Increase access to feedback tools for potential, current and former consumers of services.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 2 Objective 2.3:

Strategy 2.3a: Expand the methods by which the consumer satisfaction survey is administered in order to allow consumers to respond via a medium that is accessible to them and encourages their participation.

Strategy 2.3b: Solicit feedback from consumers, advocates and other stakeholder groups on the employment related needs of individuals with disabilities through the triennial statewide comprehensive needs assessment.

Strategy 2.3c: Partner with the State Rehabilitation Council to solicit consumer and stakeholder feedback through regularly scheduled public forums and web-based venues.

**PRIORITY 3 GOAL 3: Service Quality and Uniformity:** NC DVRS shall improve the quality and uniformity of the services it provides.

Objective 3.1: Maintain a customer focus in the planning and provision of services. Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 3 Objective 3.1:

Strategy 3.1a: Staff demonstrates the five key customer satisfaction attributes as defined by NC DHHS: job knowledge, willingness to help others, responsiveness, being respectful of others, and effective communication.

Strategy 3.1b: Consumers are involved in the planning and execution of their rehabilitation program to the extent that they are willing and able to participate.

Strategy 3.1c: Consumers are consistently and accurately informed of their rights as consumers.

Strategy 3.1d: Increase training initiatives in the area of ethics.

Objective 3.2: Ensure statewide uniformity of case management and policy implementation.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 3 Objective 3.2:

Strategy 3.2a: Develop a quality assurance plan reflective of the recent centralization of quality development activities.

**PRIORITY 4 GOAL 4: Resources:** Sustain efforts necessary to retain, train and recruit qualified staff and provide or develop resources necessary to carry out the Division's goals, priorities, and services for individuals with disabilities and our business customers statewide.

Objective 4.1: Continue to recruit qualified staff with skills critical to the delivery of all service components of the Division.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.1:

Strategy 4.1a: Increase targeted recruiting efforts in areas of identified staffing needs.

Substrategy 4.1a1: Increase targeted recruiting efforts as required to maintain deaf counselor staffing



needs to effectively serve individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing statewide.

Substrategy 4.1a2: Increase recruiting and other efforts to increase the availability of qualified vocational evaluators necessary to serve the Division's consumers statewide.

Substrategy 4.1a3: Reallocate a position to allow small business consultant to continue the consultation to Rehabilitation Counselors.

Substrategy 4.1a4: Further explore and develop a plan to re-institute a physical disabilities specialist position, should the funding environment allow, or explore other options of providing staff the desired level of guidance and analysis in areas of new and developing methods of providing consumers effective and fiscally responsible physical restoration services.

Strategy 4.1b: Effectively utilize information obtained from the system for tracking applicants who decline employment with the Division as to reason.

Objective 4.2: Provide ongoing training to staff in order to maintain a high level of service effectiveness.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.2:

Strategy 4.2a: Develop and maintain a more systematic professional development system for new and experienced staff featuring areas of focus as identified through collected evidence.

Substrategy 4.2a1: Continue to develop and regularly offer training to staff on how to more effectively serve specific disability populations.

Substrategy 4.2a2: Offer online training options to staff that are available on-demand.

Substrategy 4.2a3: Routinely conduct gap analyses of the skill sets of recent graduate hires, to determine what additional skills are needed to increase effectiveness.

Substrategy 4.2a4: Continue to offer caseload management training.

Substrategy 4.2a5: Offer continuous support and training to Division management.

Substrategy 4.2a6: Conduct the training needs assessment on a biennial basis in order to maintain the most current information on staff development needs.

Objective 4.3: Increase the retention of highly skilled staff throughout the Division.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.3:

Strategy 4.3a: Explore alternative work arrangements/options that offer more flexibility to staff in their ability to serve consumers safely and effectively. Strategy 4.3b: Develop an action plan to accommodate the large number of anticipated staff retirements within the Division.

Objective 4.4: Identify and develop resources that are critical to the delivery of all service components of the Division.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 4 Objective 4.4:

Strategy 4.4a: Effectively coordinate and leverage existing resources.

Substrategy 4.4a1: Continue to utilize staff in a flexible manner that meets local office needs while exploring new staffing patterns that effectively meet business requirements.

Substrategy 4.4a2: Review and update staff job descriptions.

Strategy 4.4b: Expand resources through partnering with entities that can positively impact the quality and effectiveness of services.

Strategy 4.4c: Pursue additional funding as needed through grant opportunities that align with the Division's established goals and priorities.

Strategy 4.4d: Conduct a critical analysis of the Division's leased office spaces to determine if they effectively meet the needs of both staff and consumers.

**PRIORITY 5 GOAL 5: Service Equity:** Promote equity in the service delivery and the quality of job outcomes for our consumers.

**Objective 5.1:** Increase outreach to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.1:

Strategy 5.1a: Based on the results of the most recently completed Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Division will focus on the following identified unserved and underserved populations of people with disabilities: women, older workers, those living in rural areas, individuals with physical disabilities, Native American Indians, and individuals with mental illness.

Strategy 5.1b: The Division will strategically provide information about its services within the working and residential communities with the largest concentrations of unserved and underserved populations within the state.

Strategy 5.1c: Division will work to establish a collaborative working relationship with culturally-oriented groups, including any economic organizations or chambers of commerce to increase successful employment of minorities and other unserved and underserved populations within North Carolina.

Strategy 5.1d: Better meet the communication needs of consumers with Limited English Proficiency.

**Objective 5.2:** Ensure that all vocational rehabilitation services are available and the decision of the appropriateness of each service for a consumer is made without regard to race, gender, disability type, age or geographic location of the consumer.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.2:

Strategy 5.2a: Increase efforts to ensure that information about all vocational rehabilitation services are made available to every consumer so that they may be an active participant in the development of their plan for services.

Strategy 5.2b: Continually improve in the uniformity of policy implementation throughout the state.

**Objective 5.3:** Continuously improve services to unserved and underserved populations of individuals with disabilities within the state as identified through the Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.3:

Strategy 5.3a: Based on the results of the most recently completed Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Division will focus on the following identified unserved and underserved populations of people with disabilities: women, older workers, those living in rural areas, individuals with physical disabilities, Native American Indians, and individuals with mental illness.

Strategy 5.3b: Provide training for counselors regarding effective practices in serving individuals identified as unserved or underserved.

Strategy 5.3c: Increase the Division's collaboration with organizations and agencies that serve and advocate for the identified unserved or underserved populations.

Substrategy 5.3c1: Establish a pilot program using peers as a means of providing support to consumers in areas where regular supports are required to increase successful employment outcomes.

Objective 5.4: Continuously improve the methods and processes by which the employment-related needs of individuals with disabilities within the state are comprehensively assessed.

Strategies and Substrategies in support of Goal 5 Objective 5.4:

Strategy 5.4a: Implement continuous data collection and analysis of variables that affect the successful provision of services for all disability groups. Strategy 5.4b: Plan and implement the Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for 2013.

## Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

### Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2011 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

**Division's Response:** The following program goals and priorities of the Division were developed in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council, along with input gathered through the comprehensive statewide needs assessment process, public input, and internal organizational needs assessment and planning processes for purposes of effectively carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. In addition, the priorities and goals established support improved performance on standards and indicators and improved compliance in casework issues identified in the Corrective Action Plan that has since been completed.

**Priority 1: Goal 1.0: Assist eligible individuals, and individuals with significant/most significant disabilities who need supported employment, to obtain, maintain, or regain high quality employment through a systematic, sustainable approach with demonstrated results.**

**Indicators for Priority 1: NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:**

**1.8** The average number of hours worked weekly by persons successfully rehabilitated.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	30.83
2008	30.26
2009	28.61
2010	28.83
2011	29.06

**Performance Assessment:** NC DVRS has experienced only a slight increase over the previous year in the average number of hours worked by individuals closed successfully, most likely the result of a continued reduction in working hours offered by employers as a result of the continued economic slowdown, which is beyond the influence of the Division. The performance on this measure tends to be influenced by the number of successful closures closed with Supported Employment decreases the average, since many individuals employed with SE do not have the capacity to work full time hours. In

general, the Division will continue to strive to increase the number of hours worked by those who close with a successful employment outcome.

**1.9** The percent of employment outcomes in technical, managerial and professional occupations\*.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	13.07%
2008	13.01%
2009	11.68%
2010	10.78%
2011	9.80%

\*Note: The use of SOC codes and the RSA-provided crosswalk in FFY 2007 resulted in an under-reporting of individuals employed in the PROF/TECH/MGR category. DOT codes were restored to the client datafiles in FFY 2008 and were used in this report.

**Performance Assessment:** The Division observed another slight decrease in the percentage of individuals receiving employment in technical, managerial, or professional occupations. The decline in the outcomes in this category are primarily reflective of the economic downturn during the time period this was measured. Consumers are possibly delaying additional education at this time in order to get any job that will bring them the much needed income at this time. The Division will continue to take measures to increase access to training opportunities and related supports to enable individuals with the interests and abilities to pursue these positions.

**1.10** Of all individuals with significant disabilities who exited the VR program after receiving services under an IPE and who were not employed at application, the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities who achieved an employment outcome with earnings.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	44.27%
2008	56.77%
2009	55.47%
2010	51.44%
2011	51.67%

**Performance Assessment:** The Division's results for the past two years appear to have stabilized in the plateau, which despite the downturn with respect to the '08 and '09 results, remains significantly higher than the starting baseline when the measure was begun, so ultimately the Division's performance has significantly improved. Pertaining to supported employment, one limiting factor possibly leading to the observed results is the continued lack of consistently available externally-provided funding for extended services.

**1.11** Of all individuals with significant disabilities receiving public support at application who exited the VR program after receiving services, the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities who achieved an employment outcome and who increased their weekly earnings.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	41.67%
2008	52.62%
2009	47.17%
2010	43.84%
2011	42.64%

**Performance Assessment:** Following a very strong performance during FFY 2008 and 09, the Division observed a slight downturn in this measurable indicator, probably due to the continued tight labor market conditions experienced in the state during FFY 2010. The trend has held relatively stable and while the efforts of the Division on behalf of these individuals remain strong, the observed results are closely tied to the economic activity and unemployment rates observed within North Carolina.

**1.12** The total, mean, and median earnings from work for the individuals identified in 1.11 who have significant disabilities and who received public support at application\*.

FFY	TOTAL Weekly Earnings at close for ISD w/Public Support at Application	MEAN Weekly Earnings at Close for Individuals with Significant Disabilities w/Public Support	MEDIAN Weekly Earnings at Close for ISD w/P.S.
2007(Baseline)	\$269,712	\$180.17	\$147.00
2008	\$303,604	\$189.16	\$150.00
2009	\$257,480	\$178.06	\$150.00

2010	\$253,321	\$193.67	\$160.00
2011	\$245,667	\$194.20	\$160.00

\*NOTE: These data include all individuals with significant disabilities and earnings outcomes who received public support at application, not just those whose earnings at closure exceeded earnings at application.

**Performance Assessment:** While the Division did realize a lower total number of placements in this category and decrease in total weekly earnings, the average and mean earnings for those employed were significantly higher and favorable. An increase in all categories is anticipated in FFY 2012.

**1.13** The percent of persons rehabilitated in full-time competitive employment who are covered by health insurance through employment.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	21.49%
2008	20.11%
2009	16.06%
2010	13.76%
2011	13.35%

**Performance Assessment:** NC DVRS consumers experienced another slight decline again this year. According to the results of a 2011 survey conducted by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the percentage of firms offering health benefits in 2011 decreased sharply to 60 percent, compared with 69 percent in 2010. The survey also tracks the cost of employer-paid premiums for worker-only health benefits, which increased 8 percent in 2011 to reach \$5,429 annually. In 2011, only 16% of employers provided single-person coverage with no required worker contribution. Workers on average are paying \$921 annually for single coverage, up from \$899 in 2010. Since 2001, premiums for family-coverage health insurance have increased 113%. Among both firms that offer and do not offer health benefits, 58% of workers are covered by health plans offered by employers--similar to 2010 results. (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Employee Health Benefits: 2011 Summary of Findings). The Division will continue to establish relationships with all sizes of employers and target employment with those who offer this benefit very necessary to our consumers.

**1.14** Number [and percentage] of successful employment outcomes after participating in post-secondary education.

FFY	Individuals	Percentage
2007 (Baseline)	932	14.92%

2008	921	14.34%
2009	757	8.31%
2010	745	12.49%
2011	677	10.74%

**Performance Assessment:** While the Division has increased tuition contributions to the catalog rates for the majority of post-secondary training to encourage participation in post-secondary education, NC DVRS is not yet seeing the results of this policy adjustment in the form of resulting employment placements. The Division will continue to look for ways to make post-secondary education a service that more consumers can benefit from. The experienced decrease is very likely the result of significant loss of positions within the state during 2009-2011. It is anticipated that this percentage will continue to increase as individuals take full advantage of the current policies pending a stabilization of the labor market.

**1.15** The average hourly wage achieved by individuals employed as a direct result of supported employment services.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	\$6.80
2008	\$7.13
2009	\$7.43
2010	\$7.90
2011	\$7.92

**Performance Assessment:** The performance observed in this measure over the timeframe presented can be partially attributed toward a general increase in wages due to the increase in the Federal minimum wage over the time period.

**1.16** The average hourly wage achieved by transitioning youths who received services as part of their IPE and who achieved successful employment outcomes.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	\$8.06



2008	\$8.02
2009	\$8.06
2010	\$8.34
2011	\$8.31

**Performance Assessment:** The Division continues to promote its in-school work adjustment services and other collaborative programs emphasizing helping transitioning youth to obtain paid work experiences, increasing their market value. The Division is also enabling more transition students to successfully participate in internships, which should result in an increase in this measure in future years.

**1.17** Decrease the percentage of individuals indicating on consumer satisfaction survey Question 8: "I do not have access to transportation to get to work."

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	11.5%
2008	10.4%
2009	11.5%
2010	10.7%
2011	12.28%

**Performance Assessment:** The measure slight decrease in respondents noting that they have no transportation for work. The Division made a significant policy adjustment February, 2008, in the rate for sponsorship of private mileage, private conveyance from 25 cents/mile to the current IRS rate cents/mile. In FFY 2011, 7,046 individuals received transportation services (only 324 fewer individuals than the year prior) and increased their total expenditures in the transportation-related categories by another 11.4% beyond the previous year. Consumers utilize a variety of transportation modalities including driving their own vehicles, riding public transit systems, paratransit and taxi in areas where available.

**Priority 2: Goal 2.0: Increase the customer's ability to easily access the Division's programs, services, feedback tools, and information that will help them understand the NC DVRS program and potential services available to them as well as to subsequently make informed choices regarding their employment goals and Individualized Plan for Employment should they apply and are determined eligible for services.**

Indicators for Priority 2: NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

**2.2** The number[and percentage]of all individuals referred from JobLink Career Centers who achieve an employment outcome after receiving VR services through an IPE.

FFY	Individuals	Percentage
2007 (Baseline)	88	52.38%
2008	65	46.10%
2009	59	51.75%
2010	75	52.82%
2011	73	55.30%

**Performance Assessment:** It appears that the number of VR referrals from JobLinks has remained steady and can be increased through continued collaboration and educational efforts. A positive trend observed is the increased success rate indicative of more appropriate referrals being made by the JobLinks to the VR program.

**2.3** The percentage of all consumers responding via the consumer satisfaction survey [both successfully (status 26) and unsuccessfully (status 28) closed following receipt of services under an IPE] that their "overall experience with the North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) program" was excellent.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	50.0%
2008	51.7%
2009	51.4%
2010	49.1%
2011	50.69%

FFY 2011 Respondents by Closure Status: Successful Closure with Employment: (505) 58.86%  
Unsuccessful Closure following receipt of services: (86) 27.9%

**Performance Assessment:** Consumer satisfaction showed a slight rebound during FFY 2011 and a slight increase over the baseline percentage. The Division will strive for additional progress in this area through continued emphasis on servicing the customer, and anticipates that once the new electronic casework management software system is installed and staff learn to use it effectively that an increase in consumer satisfaction should be observed, should all other variables remain consistent.

**2.4** The percentage of all consumers responding via the consumer satisfaction survey [both successfully (status 26) and unsuccessfully (status 28) closed following receipt of services under an IPE] that the response time of services received by Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff was excellent.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	46.50%
2008	48.60%
2009	47.70%
2010	45.99%
2011	48.38%

FFY 2011 Respondents By Closure Status: Successful Closure with Employment: (474) 55.12%  
Unsuccessful Closure following receipt of services: (93) 21.81%

**Performance Assessment:** NC DVRS experienced strong increase in this indicator and anticipates that some improvement will be observed following full implementation of the newer easier to use electronic casework accounting system that should facilitate timelier service delivery should all other variables such as staff vacancies and funding remain stable.

**2.5** The average consumer satisfaction survey rating of the eight (8) service categories mentioned under question 2 inquiring if the Division's services helped them "a lot."

FFY	RESULTS
2008 (Baseline)	37.25%
2009	39.46%
2010	37.60%
2011	39.49%

**Performance Assessment:** The Division observed another rebound this year to its highest level since this measure has been tracked. The area where the consumer indicated the greatest amount of assistance was received was helping identify the consumer's employment-related needs and the area where the least assistance was perceived was receiving on-the-job training. This is consistent with the previous year's results, despite heavy promotion of OJT services during FFY 2011. Possibly, the results are reflective that not every consumer answering the survey was in need of this service or it did not apply to their situation. Consumer satisfaction survey results continue to be presented statewide and made available via the VR intranet so that service staff are aware of the results and can be conscious of these service elements.

**Priority 3: Goal 3.0: NC DVRS shall improve and expand its service capabilities through increased collaboration with entities that can positively impact the quality and effectiveness of services provided.**

Indicators for Priority 3: NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

**3.1** The number of transition-age youths who achieved a competitive employment outcome after receiving services under an IPE\*.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	1,771 youths
2008	1,881 youths
2009	1,815 youths
2010	1,699 youths
2011	1,794 youths

**Performance Assessment:** Despite the noted increase in individuals utilizing VR services earlier as a result of OCS curriculum, this indicator did rebound this year and exceeded the baseline measure, despite the current economic situation. This may be the result of continued emphasis on helping transition counselors be aware of all of the services that offer work experiences for the transition population.

**3.2** Of all of transition-age youths who exited the VR program after receiving services under an IPE, the percentage of transition-age youths who achieved a competitive employment outcome\*.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	45.22%
2008	56.59%
2009	60.42%
2010	59.01%
2011	59.31%

\*Note: Transition Age Youth (TAY) includes VR consumers under age 24 at closure. This definition is expanded from the used in the last report (i.e., under age 23) to conform to the RSA reporting definition. Data for FFY 2007 are updated accordingly.

**Performance Assessment:** Division is pleased to have steadily exceeded the baseline measure for this indicator. The students in North Carolina's Occupational Course of Study (OCS) are in competitive employment or actively searching for employment. NC DVRS's Business Relations Representatives (BRRs) become involved in the cases prior to the student's exit. Some of the Memorandum of Agreements between NC DVRS and the school systems have added BRRs to work with the schools. Another effective strategy improving student outcomes appears to be the use of the benefits specialist and the outreach of the Work Incentive program providing information with school teachers and families of students with significant disabilities.

**3.3** The number of transition-age youth receiving special education under an IEP who received vocational rehabilitation services under an IPE.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	2,629 youths
2008	2,350 youths
2009	2,405 youths
2010	2,312 youths
2011	2,437 youths

**Performance Assessment:** During FFY 2011 the number of youth transitioning from IEP to IPE-based services only slightly rebounded to their highest level since 2007, but the number of youths remains below the baseline number. The Division will continue to explore ways to reach out to school-aged youths through creative collaborative outreach through career exploration events and fairs to continue to keep this age focused on their future employment needs. Please note that the percentage in 3.4 below remains at a high level and actually increased. Active collaboration among all responsible organizations to increase training and coordination is ongoing.

**3.4** Of all transition-age special education students, the percentage of transition-age special education students who received vocational rehabilitation services under an IPE and special education services under an IEP.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	67.13%
2008	70.83%
2009	80.06%

2010	80.31%
2011	80.56%

**Performance Assessment:** NC DVRS attributes the observed increase in percentage to the strong collaborations with schools. NC DVRS transition counselors are actively attending the school transition conferences and local regional meetings keeping communication open to work on situations that effect referrals. Relationships continue to be strengthened by NC DVRS and schools getting information at the same time.

**3.5** Increase successful employment outcomes resulting from individuals receiving supported employment services.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	1,098
2008	1,122
2009	1,043
2010	923
2011	968

**Performance Assessment:** The observed employment numbers observed between FFY 2008 through 2011 is most likely a reflection of the economic situation in North Carolina and should slowly but steadily rebound, should employment trends continue on its present course. While some of the supported employment providers subsidize portions of extended services expenses through realized profits, others are more reliant on funding through the mental health system's Local Management Entity. Funding through both of these sources are reduced during tight economic times and actually limits the outcomes of these combined efforts, despite effective collaboration that is steadily occurring. The Division has six community rehabilitation program specialists and a statewide program specialist providing increased guidance to counselors and an active steering committee that proactively plans and addresses any issues that providers wish to address.

**3.6** Increase successful employment outcomes resulting from individuals receiving work adjustment/job coaching services\*.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	1,023
2008	1,042

2009	1,028
2010	1,051
2011	1,325

\*These data include individuals in the NC DVRS PUR system for other than evaluation, and those who received authorizations for these services that have since been paid.

**Performance Assessment:** During 2011, Work Adjustment /Job Coaching services enabled the highest number of individuals to close successfully in employment as compared with the previous four years. This is reflective of a healthy working relationship with the various Community Rehabilitation Programs that provide this service effectively, especially through the collaborative work adjustment training opportunities that were created as the result of increased one-time ARRA funding that innovatively utilized these services with increased outcomes.

**3.7 Increase successful employment outcomes of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, including psychosocial or other mental health conditions\*.**

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	1,190
2008	1,335
2009	1,287
2010	1,221
2011	1,320

\*NOTE: excludes TBI, SA, and Autism statistics

**Performance Assessment:** The Division experienced a relatively strong year during FFY 2011 possibly as a result of the success of ARRA-funded CRP-based contracts providing creative training solutions and increased OJT opportunities. The Division is developing an RFA for providing peer support relating to employment for many within this population, which once established, should increase these numbers beyond 2011 levels.

**Priority 4: Goal 4.0: Increase measures necessary to recruit, train and retain qualified staff and provide resources and tools necessary to carry out the Division's goals, priorities, and programmatic services for individuals with disabilities statewide.**

Indicators for Priority 4: NC DVRS will equal or improve performance when compared to the baseline for the following measurable indicators:

**4.1 Increase the number of qualified applicants for Rehabilitation Counselor I and Vocational Evaluator positions for units where recruitment difficulties exist.**

FFY	Position	Qualified Applicants
2008 (Baseline)	Rehabilitation Counselor I	2 (AVG.)
	Vocational Evaluator I	1 (AVG.)
2009	Rehabilitation Counselor I	4.75 (AVG.)
	Vocational Evaluator I	4.125 (AVG.)
2010	Rehabilitation Counselor I	17 (AVG.)
	Vocational Evaluator I	11 (AVG.)
2011	Rehabilitation Counselor I	21 (AVG.)
	Vocational Evaluator I	8 (AVG.)

**Performance Assessment:** The Division successfully increased the average number of Rehabilitation Counselor applicants during this period; however, the Division experienced a reduction in the number of Vocational Evaluation applicants. Subsequently, there were no locations who had difficulty filling their VE positions. Overall, the quality of the applicants was improved.

**4.2 Increase the number of interns who are hired into Rehabilitation Counselor positions.**

FFY	RESULTS
2008 (Baseline)	18
2009	13
2010	17
2011	7

**Performance assessment:** During FFY 2011, (9) interns were hired, but only (7) into Rehabilitation Counselor positions. Two additional offers were made to interns, but declined.



**4.3** Decrease the average number of direct service staff (Counselor, Human Services Coordinator, Manager, Vocational Evaluator, Rehabilitation Engineer) vacancies quarterly.

FFY	RESULTS
2008 (Baseline)	38 (Quarterly average for group of positions)
2009	53.5
2010	54
2011	37

**Performance Assessment:** While the Division did observe a reduction in the average number of vacant positions quarterly, a trend up each quarter was observed. This is largely due to the freeze release process and to the restructure of the Division's Independent Living Program.

**4.4** Decrease the average vacancy length of direct service staff (Counselor, Human Services Coordinator, Manager, Vocational Evaluator, Rehabilitation Engineer) on an annual basis.

FFY	RESULTS
2008 (Baseline)	223 days (annual average for group of positions*)
2009	260 days*
2010	126 days*
2011	135 days

\* BEACON system has allowed improved accuracy of reporting and this number has been updated.

**Performance Assessment:** The observed increase is again attributed to the position freeze release process in place, and to other changes driven by budget and legislation that impacted recruitment. The vacant regional director position in the Division's central region also contributed to an increase in vacant positions within this region.

**4.5** Decrease the percentage of all individuals closed unsuccessfully as a result of the counselor being unable to locate or contact them.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	32.33%

2008	30.72%
2009	30.71%
2010	32.35%
2011	32.15%

**Requirement:**

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

**Division's Response:**

**Supported Employment Goal 1:** Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive supported employment services.

FFY 2008 (Baseline): 4,206 individuals      FFY 2009: 4,264 individuals      FFY 2010: 4,385 individuals  
FFY 2011: 4,372 individuals

**Performance Assessment:** Several factors contributed toward the successful achievement of this goal, when reviewing the trend above, among them successful collaborative committee work of the CRP-DVR steering committee systematically addressing any problem areas in the provision of services; several regional collaborative trainings where best practices and foundational information was reinforced; excellent educational efforts and management by the six regional CRP-Specialists, and better information dissemination through an improved web site presenting information on these services.

**Supported Employment Goal 2:** Increase the number of individuals who receive supported employment services who have deafness, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind, traumatic brain injury, or mental illness as their primary disability.

FFY 2008 (Baseline): 1,272 individuals      FFY 2009: 1,334 individuals      FFY 2010: 1,322 individuals  
FFY 2011: 922 individuals

**Performance Assessment:** The significant decrease in the number of individuals within these disability categories is concerning, and one of the possible factors for this is the loss of a community rehabilitation program that had aggressively grown along with their employment of numerous deaf job coaches. Their rapid regional expansion apparently was not sustainable and the Division is working toward supplanting these services. Continued improvements in working relationships with the MH/DD/SAS, NCDVRS, and the community rehabilitation programs may help turn this sudden decline around going forward.

**Supported Employment Goal 3:** Increase the percentage of individuals who were closed as successfully employed after receiving supported employment services (success rate).

FFY 2008 (Baseline): 64%  
49%

FFY 2009: 58%

FFY 2010: 51%

FFY 2011:

**Performance Assessment:** This observed decline, which the Division is intent on reversing may partially be attributed to the instability of several SE service providers during this period. During this economic downturn, several programs were struggling to retain staff due to overarching financial concerns. Furthermore, our community rehabilitation program specialists indicate that this trend may also be attributed to their observation that today's employers are most interested in hiring workers who are able to multitask as compared with an individual dedicated toward one or two tasks. This therefore limits the placement opportunities for individuals receiving supported employment services. The longstanding shortage of funds dedicated to long term follow along for this population is another important factor. The new employment specialist with the NC MH/DD/SAS has been working diligently and strategically to do everything in their realm of influence to turn this around, despite the constant changing structuring of that Division's service delivery components.

**Supported Employment Goal 4:** Of the Community Rehabilitation Programs serving North Carolinians with disabilities, a minimum of 85% shall have obtained current national accreditation.

May 2009 (Baseline): 84% nationally accredited  
accredited

May 2010: 88% nationally

May 2011: 84% nationally accredited

**Performance Assessment:** The most significant changes that occurred between May 2010 and 2011 are actually good changes. Several Community Rehabilitation Programs serving North Carolina migrated toward CARF(Commision on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) accreditation, which represents possibly the highest standards. In 2009, only 63 CRPs serving NC were CARF accredited, compared with 74 who are CARF accredited as of May 2011. CARF accreditation is a difficult accreditation to obtain and maintain, but is supported by the Division, as both of its training programs WorkSource West and WorkSource East maintain CARF accreditation.

**Supported Employment Goal 5:** Collaboratively increase supported employment training to NC DVRS rehabilitation counselors and Community Rehabilitation Program direct service staff through the addition of a web-based curriculum development.

**Performance Assessment:** Through the efforts of the CRP specialists and a subcommittee of the CRP-DVRS Steering Committee, progress towards initial planning for this has been made. A needs assessment has been conducted in addition to the development of core curriculum topics. The curriculum is presently under construction/revision. The Division will continue to work with the regional TACE to implement components of the training effort addressing this area.

**Supported Employment Goal 6:** Continue collaboration with the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services to secure reporting of the expenditures of the Long Term Support service definition (YM 645) in order to assure consistent administration of these funds. This will become critical as more local management entities (LMEs) move to single stream funding. Additional work needs to be done on assuring utilization of this service for consumers with mental health diagnoses, as indicated within the definition.

**Performance Assessment:** The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services hired an employment specialist that is quickly helping bridge a communications gap that has existed in previous years. This will help assure employment issues are regularly addressed between our two divisions. Further, this individual has been very involved improving LME funding agreements to provide emphasis on effective utilization and accounting of extended services funding for recipients of supported employment services. The individual is also providing regular education to the service provider community. Efforts within the Division are largely spearheaded through the Program Specialists from the Division's Employment Services, Program Development and Outreach Section. They maintain representation on The Mental Health Planning Council which effectively assures planning and funding for consumers with mental health disabilities. In addition, the section was represented on the NC Institute of Medicine's Task Force on Transitions for Persons with Developmental Disabilities which reviewed all aspects of the service system in NC, including employment. Employment was identified as a priority area which will give NC Legislators insight into service challenges such as adequate funding for extended services.

**NOTE:** Title VI; Part B Funds only make up approximately 5.2% of the Division's annual commitment of resources for supported employment programs that serve the most significantly disabled consumers.

**Requirement:**

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2011.

**Division's Response:**

For FFY 2011, NC DVRS met all RSA standards and indicators with the exception of indicator 1.5.

1.1 The number of persons achieving employment outcomes will equal or exceed the previous year.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	6,271 individuals
2008	6,442 individuals
2009	6,290 individuals
2010	5,961 individuals
2011	6,303 individuals

**Performance Assessment:** During FFY 2011, the number of successful employment outcomes increase by 342 than the previous year and 13 more than in 2009. Despite North Carolina's unemployment rate hovering around 10% during FFY 2011 and the net loss of 308,100 non-farm jobs (7.4% decrease) in NC between Dec 2007 and Jan 2011, the Division was able to find employment for more individuals largely on account of its successful partnerships with community rehabilitation programs and employers through the Dual Customer Approach initiative begun about 7 years prior. Other strategies employed to improve performance on this indicator are summarized in attachment 4.11(d). One particular strategy of which the foundational components were laid during FFY 2010 was the time-limited adjustment to On-

The-Job training and internship services reimbursement enabled by time-limited ARRA funding. 100% of wages were reimbursed to encourage cash-strapped employers to train then hire consumers while developing a mutually beneficial working relationship. During a period of time spanning FFY 2010-2011, 527 individuals who participated in either of these services had successfully exited the VR program employed.

**1.2** The percentage of all individuals who have achieved an employment outcome after exiting the program having received services will equal or exceed 55.8%.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	47.15%
2008	59.18%
2009	58.83%
2010	56.55%
2011	56.49%

**Performance Assessment:** The Division is pleased to have met this indicator again during FFY 2011, during which, increased awareness of this indicator enabled increased emphasis by management. Group orientation at the larger offices continues to help this indicator by better informing potential applicants of the program's emphasis and requirements prior to application. Those who were not interested in the program and requirements following the group orientation did not apply for services, which increased the success rate.

**1.3** The percentage of individuals rehabilitated who achieve competitive employment earning at least minimum wage will equal or exceed 72.6%

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	100%
2008	100%
2009	100%
2010	100%
2011	100%

**Performance Assessment:** NC DVRS continues to have strong performance in this indicator, since competitive employment remains a successful closure standard within the Division's policy.

**1.4** The percent of individuals who have significant disabilities among those who achieve competitive employment will be at least 62.4%.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	71.82%
2008	76.06%
2009	76.98%
2010	77.18%
2011	77.02%

**Performance Assessment:** The Division continues to greatly exceed the RSA standard in this category due in part to excellent collaboration and outreach efforts with community rehabilitation programs, advocacy groups, and multiple referral sources.

**1.5** The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the program in competitive employment as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all employed North Carolinians will equal or exceed 0.52.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	Ratio: 48.72*
2008	Ratio: 48.76*
2009	Ratio: 48.84*
2010	Ratio: 49.89*
2011	Ratio: 47.67*

\*Note: These data are contingent on available data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average NC hourly wage is now reported at \$18.54 for FFY 2007, \$18.77 for FFY 2008, \$19.01 for FFY 2009, and \$19.30 for FFY 2010. For FFY 2011, average NC earnings are based on the most recent four quarters of information available (\$19.83).

**Performance Assessment:** This indicator continues to present a challenge to the Division, despite strategies to encourage additional education and training for increasing consumers' market value, meeting this indicator continues to elude our best efforts to date. This year the planning and evaluation unit has

begun focusing on this to determine factors and additional strategies. At this time, the Division is investigating ways to increase earning through increasing the number of individuals who are able to earn a marketable bachelor's degree with the Division's assistance. Policies undoubtedly will continue to be adjusted to encourage post-secondary training for all situations where an individual with a disability can potentially benefit from such training. On the other hand, increasing the number of individuals served through supported employment, where wages are traditionally lower, has an undesirable effect on the Division's performance on this measure, but the commitment to this place and train approach will remain strong going forward.

**1.6** Of the individuals who achieve competitive employment, the difference between the percent who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at closure compared to the percent at application. The difference must equal or exceed 53.0.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	65.05
2008	65.94
2009	62.94
2010	62.29
2011	63.81

**Performance Assessment:** The Division has shown solid performance on this indicator, and anticipates continued performance in FFY 2012.

**2.1** The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio of the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities will equal or exceed 0.80.

FFY	RESULTS
2007 (Baseline)	Ratio: 0.97
2008	Ratio: 1.00
2009	Ratio: 0.99
2010	Ratio: 0.97
2011	Ratio: 0.99

**Performance Assessment:** NC DVRS continues to perform well on this indicator and expects to continue strong performance indefinitely, facilitated by outreach, a diversified service base, and

continued efforts to collaborate with organizations representing diverse populations. Cultural awareness training efforts as part of the revised goals will also help maintain the Division's strong performance on this indicator going forward.

**Requirement:**

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2011.

**Division's Response:**

During FFY 2011 NC DVRS reserved and used a portion of Title I funds to move forward with the strategies identified to achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1). The areas where funds were utilized include:

- Strategic Needs and Assessment Planning (SNAP): The Division continues to increase the effectiveness of program service delivery and performance through ongoing work of the Strategic Needs and Assessment Planning (SNAP) initiative.
- Specialized Supported Employment Demonstration Project: In collaboration with NC Easterseals/UCP, a demonstration program that targets the provision of extensive wrap around support services for dually-diagnosed individuals with mental and mobility impairments that have not been successful with traditional supported employment programs was funded. During SFY 2011, the demonstration program reported that 9 individuals achieved competitive employment outcomes or reached stabilization in employment.
- Support of Activities of the State Rehabilitation Council and Rehabilitation Engineering Services Program.

During FFY 2011, the Division placed significant efforts on effectively utilizing ARRA funds allocated to help meet the needs of consumers with significant and most significant disabilities in areas of employment training, employment-related transportation, and the creation of CRP-based enterprises for purposes of training. The 31 CRP-NC DVRS formal contracts concluded at the end of FFY 2011 resulting in 1,065 consumers receiving training services, with 303 resulting in successful employment outcomes. NC DVRS' ARRA investment in these 31 contracts laid significant groundwork for continued innovative and expanded services. ARRA funding also helped the Division to further develop and expand its use of paid time-limited Internships for consumers and paid On-the-Job Training (OJT) work experiences where the Division partnered with employers to increase consumers' real world work experience and marketability. Outcomes of ARRA-funded On-the-Job Training and Internship services expansion as described above:

	Total	On-The-Job Training	Internship with Employer
VR consumers participating	1,261	767	533
Number receiving jobs after OJT/Internship	527	397	144
Number of	686	445	301



Employers partnering with VR			
Number of Counties where activities occurred	89	85	55
ARRA funds invested in these services	\$3,861,397	\$1,954,626	\$1,906,771

1,081 of these VR consumers had significant or most significant disabilities, with major disability groups represented including Mental Illness/Substance Abuse, Mobility/Dexterity, Chronic medical, Sensory, Cognitive/Learning, and Traumatic Brain Injury. Gender: 711 Male; 550 Female; Race/Ethnicity: 671 White, non-Hispanic; 590 Minority; Age: Fairly equal distribution between age groups beginning with under 18 – 54 years old; 6% of individuals served were 55 years and older. The employer-based Internship and OJT services became greatly developed as a result of the ARRA funding and continue to be well utilized employing non-ARRA funds.

### **Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services**

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

#### **Division's Response:**

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in cooperation with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, provided grant funding in 1985 to 6 service providers in North Carolina to implement supported employment services. In 1986 the Division was awarded funding from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services to create a systems change approach to implementing supported employment services in North Carolina. Since 1987 the Division's effort has grown to a statewide system of approximately 118 supported employment programs. During FFY 2011, 4,372 individuals received supported employment services and 968 of these individuals achieved a successful employment outcome. Supported employment providers receive vendorship funding through the utilization of Title VI, Part B funds and General services fund (110). Title VI, Part B funds will continue to be utilized to supplement funds under Part B of Title I for the cost of supported employment services to persons with the most significant disabilities. However, the extent of services offered to a particular individual is determined on an individual basis incorporating the individual's informed choice pertaining to their need to achieve and to maintain a vocational goal. Examples of populations that will be served include (but are not limited to) individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, significant cognitive impairments, cerebral palsy, autism, and traumatic head injury. Supported employment services will be provided on a time-limited basis to individuals with the most significant disabilities. These services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- development of and placement in jobs based on client informed choice in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, interests, concerns, abilities, and capabilities of individuals with the most significant disabilities;
- intensive on-site job skills training and other training provided by skilled job trainers, co-workers, and other qualified individuals, including fading and stabilization;
- extended follow along services, including regular contact with employers, trainees, parents, guardians, or other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement; and
- discrete post-employment services may be funded under Title I of the Act following the individual's transition to extended services if the required services are unavailable from the extended service providers and if they are necessary to maintain the job placement.

In addition to the individual and group models of supported employment, the transitional employment model will continue to be funded on a demonstration basis. These programs will provide transitional employment services to persons with severe and persistent mental illness and will serve as model sites for future transitional employment programs. Under federal regulations, the time-limited vocational rehabilitation supported employment services to be provided are not to exceed 18 months funding unless the individualized plan for employment indicates that more than 18 months of services is necessary in order for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transition to extended services. The transition process from vocational rehabilitation services to the extended service phase begins during the stabilization phase of supported employment. During this phase, the counselor documents the individual's adjustment to the job environment and job duties. Some indicators of stabilization include, but are not limited to, employer satisfaction, client satisfaction and minimal job coach intervention. The extended

services phase continues during the 90 days after the end of the stabilization phase. Interagency involvement begins from the point of referral for vocational rehabilitation services provided by the Division and continues until the stabilization phase is completed and the long-term support provider begins providing extended services.